

AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

# Wild

MORE THAN 30 YEARS OF WILDERNESS ADVENTURE HERITAGE

ISSUE

145

SLEEPING ON SUMMITS  
EXPLORING UPPER DOLPO  
VIC VOLCANOES TRACK NOTES  
ARETHUSA CANYONING  
KAKADU: STONE COUNTRY  
TRIED & TESTED: 3 SEASON TENTS  
BUSHFIRE SURVIVAL SKILLS  
PROFILE: KRYSTLE WRIGHT

## *Elevated awareness*

Quentin's latest beat  
Beginner's guide to SUP  
Damming our ecosystems  
Challenging NSW Explorers  
Portrait: Kyle Williams  
Foraging for a meal

ISSN 1030-469X



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# Wild

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## WARNING

The activities covered  
in this magazine are  
dangerous. Undertaking  
them without proper training,  
experience, skill, regard to  
safety and equipment can  
result in serious injury or death.



*Cover Stargazing in the  
Himalayas, Upper Dolpo,  
Nepal. Alex Treadway*  
[alextreadway.co.uk](http://alextreadway.co.uk)

**Contents** Wildflowers on  
Mt Lee, NSW  
Mike Edmonson /  
[mikeedmonson.com.au](http://mikeedmonson.com.au)



"We need the tonic of wildness... At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplored, that land and sea be indefinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable. We can never have enough of nature."

HENRY D. THOREAU, WALDEN

## A Wild paradox

A contradiction lies at the heart of our love of wilderness.

In entering the world of *Wild* magazine, I have endeavoured to reach out to as many readers and contributors as possible. It's an attempt to not only grasp the readership's sentiments and our writers' mores, but also to catch a glimpse of the beast that lies at the core of every publication – that central code, tenet or thematic focal point that underpins the content and provides a defined context.

It would be simple enough to define *Wild* as its founding editor, Chris Baxter, did in the very first issue. He wrote: "Wild is a new magazine for those who enjoy the adventure of wild places... it took shape over the past few years in discussion with other rucksack enthusiasts."

More tellingly, he described the readership: as "bushwalkers, ski tourers, canoeists and climbers".

For anyone who first views the magazine on the shelf of their local newsagent, this definition no doubt holds true and there's no need to look beyond it. Yet if they become a subscriber and read issue upon issue (as many of you have, some from the very first issue as released in 1981), a point of tension begins to develop. It is this dissonance that I have come to realise forms something of a keystone within the literature – a paradox that requires further exploration in order to be tamed.

Our love for the wild is killing it.

The more we wish to utilise and enjoy our wilderness spaces, the more damage we inflict on them. As we now know, today Australia is one of the worst offenders as a nation when it comes to threatening the existence of species (p17).

Spending a week at the IUCN World Parks Congress in November gave me the pleasure of conversing with people from many backgrounds; including conservationists.

I spoke with Chrissy Grant (see p12), now retired from her role as director of Indigenous Heritage for the Commonwealth. I also spoke with Gregory Andrews, the federal commissioner for Threatened Species. Everyone I spoke to confirmed my suspicion, revealing to me the dilemma that threatens

our passion for the wild on an increasingly regular basis. Whether it's climate change, habitat fragmentation or invasive species, humanity's lust for life is strangling it. Perhaps Chris didn't realise the extent to which his magazine would evolve. In looking back, it's clear that a significant evolution has taken place. From the Geoff Mosleys or Bob Browns of decades past, to the weekend warriors and one-click petitions of this brave new world, as a society we seem to have traded an element of the intrepid – the 'hard graft' – for an easier path.

As Tim Macartney-Snape recently told me, it isn't like there aren't any mountains left to surmount or untrodden forest paths yet to tread, it's just that fewer of those young people most able to do so seem willing to take the risk anymore. Ironically, in drawing this analogy between adventure and conservation, we invoke that same paradox: how can we continue to be intrepid if we must abide by the strictures and regulations required for sustaining biodiversity? Perhaps the apathy that typifies my generation is (in part) a reaction to these kinds of contradictory ideals.

Regardless of the reasons, the mission for *Wild* is defined for me in the overlap between adventure and conservation. We must celebrate our wilderness places and those who enter them, as per its original charter, but not without highlighting their fragility and beauty. Not without defending those places from those that would abuse them, knowingly or otherwise.

I hope to facilitate the ongoing evolution of this publication in order to further these goals as a platform for a community of wilderness lovers, whoever they may be. And this must be done in such a way as to enable the community to explore without destruction, to leave some things "unfathomable by us because unfathomable".

Campbell Phillips  
Editor

# Wild

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Issue 144, Nov-Dec 2014



## LETTER OF THE ISSUE

Leisa wins a set of MSR Swift™ 2 Walking Poles valued at \$219. These adjustable aluminium trekking poles feature breathable straps and foam grips for continuous comfort.

## CAMPING WITH CHILDREN

My husband and I met through our shared passion for bushwalking, but fast-forward 14 years and our enthusiasm for walking had been reduced to short day walks that were suitable for our four small children. We often talked about overnight walks, but it became clear that we would not be able to carry kids and enough gear to complete an overnight walk without becoming proud owners of a mule. We just had to bide our time, waiting for them to be old enough to walk and carry some of their own camping equipment. That moment arrived in August this year. Our children are nine, seven, five and three, and we decided that our first family overnight walk would be to Oberon Bay at Wilsons Promontory. I cannot describe their excitement at visiting the Macpac store to purchase a backpack and other assorted camping equipment for our big trip. We had worried that our three year old daughter would refuse to walk so far, but being with her family and carrying her own backpack gave her confidence to walk all the way to the campsite and all the way back again. We are thrilled to be able to introduce our children to an outdoor world that has so many possibilities and adventures. We had such a fantastic time that we have since completed the Oberon Bay walk again (just to ensure it wasn't a fluke) and we have also completed an overnight walk to Sealers Cove at Wilsons Promontory. Next on the list is Mount Erica at Mount Baw Baw National Park. There is no better feeling than putting on all of our boots for a new family adventure.

Leisa Meyer  
Warragul, VIC

## MUMC HISTORY

I'd like to correct two errors in the article on the Melbourne University Mountaineering Club on page 10 of Wild issue 144. First, the climbers in the Sugarloaf photo are not David and Sandra Hogg. That photo was taken in the early 1950s when Sandra and I were young children. The lead climber is John Young (one of the 'Three Johns' who died in New Zealand shortly afterwards) and the other is Max Anderson. The photo was given to me for use in a history of MUMC, which is approaching completion. The incorrect identification was apparently copied from our email address when I forwarded a copy of the photograph to the Club. Second, contrary to popular opinion, the MUMC call sign, Oxo, has nothing to do with Oxo cubes. The full story of its origin is too long to include in this letter, but is told in my previous version of the MUMC history written in 1972, and is being retold in the current version. If any Wild readers who are former MUMC members are interested in helping me in completing this history by reviewing sections of the draft (particularly covering the period since the mid 1970s) or by offering photographs for inclusion, I can be contacted at dhogg@homeemail.com.au.

David Hogg  
Weetangera, ACT

**Ed's note:** Thank you for the correction, David. No doubt many of our readers are looking forward to seeing your history of the MUMC completed.

## US VS THEM?

I believe outdoor recreation in natural places has unique and positive outcomes for individuals, the environment and society as a whole. I'm an active participant in conversations about this topic - everything from online forums and pub debates, to activity standards and legislative reviews. I also happen to be the owner of a business that makes money from taking people into the bush. And I have a gripe. In nearly every forum where I interact with the broad outdoor community (my community!), commercial operators are painted rapacious, money hungry, bush bashers with no regard for conservation - the default scapegoat when damage occurs in the bush. The "Us versus Them" split of recreational versus commercial is a foolish one. The split that matters is those who care for the bush and those who don't.

Dylan Jones  
Katoomba, NSW

**Reader's letters & tips** are welcome and could win you a useful piece of outdoor kit. Write to Wild, 11-15 Buckhurst St, South Melbourne, VIC 3026 or email [wild@primcreative.com.au](mailto:wild@primcreative.com.au)

## FRIENDS &amp; FOLLOWERS

- f** **Stewart Monckton:** Shingleback Lizards are always a nice find - when you look them in the eye, you can see a dinosaur looking back - but then they snaffle down a piece of hanaana and they don't seem so fierce!
- f** **National Parks Association of Queensland:** Only 4.8% of Queensland is included in national park. We think that figure should be much larger.
- f** **Great Forest National Park:** In parts of the Great Forest National Park giant tree-fern gullies shelter pockets of ancient rainforest, ecosystem enclaves harking back 70-odd million years to Gondwanan times.
- t** **@frenchricky:** I went to French Island for Wild magazine because no one else would. It had my name all over it.
- t** **@StedjeTanya:** "My most memorable hikes can be classified as 'Shortcuts that Backfired'." - Edward Abbey.

## BUSHWALKING TIP



If a hot spot in the boot indicates a blister on the way, reach for the grey plastic supermarket shopping bag (sorry; a green reusable bag simply won't do the trick). Holding the bag by the handles, fold the bag lengthwise into about four folds. DON'T put your foot into the bag; put your socked foot through the handles to hold it in place and lie the bag over the heel and under the foot. Slip your foot into your boot, keeping the bag as smooth as possible.

Dinny Kube  
Via email



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## Wild

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# Signatures in snow



Dan Mitchell from Fairy Meadow in New South Wales writes: *Here's a landscape you wouldn't expect to see in Australia. My good friend Steve Leake captured me inspecting the early morning signatures on the other side of Watson's Crag in Kosciuszko National Park, New South Wales, using a Canon EOS 100D.*

## Photographer's checklist: Shooting at altitude

- *Weather* can be both friend and enemy when taking photographs in exposed locations. What may make for an awesome scene can quickly result in your camera gear being destroyed and the loss of that perfect scene. One of the biggest issues with digital cameras and especially the digital SLR cameras is dust and grime on your camera's sensor. The best way to avoid dust and dirt spots on your sensor is to always ensure that when changing lenses, where your camera's insides are open to the elements, change it away and out of the wind and weather. Ensure that you put on the camera body caps as soon as possible. If you can, change your lens in your car, tent or shelter. This will minimise any chance of dust and dirt getting inside your camera, which will reduce your camera maintenance bill and improve its longevity.
- When climbing high peaks, the temperature at the top will differ from that at the base - the higher you go, the colder it gets. All cameras have a working temperature range (see owner's manual) that will indicate what temperatures your camera can operate normally. Sub-zero temperatures or very high temperatures

will affect your camera and possibly render it useless... just as the sun is setting on the perfect mountain range shot. To avoid temperature issues in cold conditions, put your camera under your first layer of clothing or wrap it well within your bag. Another idea is to use the portable hand warmer patches; place these in your camera bag and this may help keep your gear warmer (just be mindful not to rest the heat bags directly against your camera or lens). Note: Remember that when you take your camera out, allow for it to acclimatise a little, but not too much. You will most likely experience a bit of fogging and condensation when you first take it out. Let that settle, and then shoot away...

- Regarding condensation and humidity, it's always a good idea to have small silicone desiccants in your camera bag. These can be purchased at many retail outlets and can help reduce the effects of water vapour, temperature changes and the effects these have on valuable camera equipment.
- Finally, always have a cleaning kit on you to help remove dirt and moisture from your camera and lens. Treat your camera gear with respect and it will pay dividends into the future.



Award-winning landscape photographer Cameron Blake runs weekend workshops and six-day tours on the Overland Track. His next Oxtail Mountain workshop will occur in April, the specific date of which is to be decided. [Overlandphototours.com.au](http://Overlandphototours.com.au)



Dan wins a Gerber Industrial MP1 multi-tool valued at \$189.99. This all-in-one device includes 12 professional-grade components, including pliers, three blades, three screwdrivers and a pry bar bottle opener, as well as a lifetime warranty.

For your chance to win a quality piece of outdoor kit, send your humorous, inspiring or spectacular shots to [wild@primecreative.com.au](mailto:wild@primecreative.com.au).

To be considered for the Mar/Apr Wild Shot, submit your best photo by February 1.

# ANUMC event's belated anniversary

Author: Jessica Hancock

The ANUMC pose for yet another successful Cocktails on the Castle event. Photo: Jessica Hancock



Standing atop one of Australia's finest flat-topped mountains in the middle of the NSW Budawang Range while wearing formal evening attire and sipping cocktails chilled with ice is a memorable experience – but it's no glamping luxury trip either.

The even more memorable hike to the summit necessarily precedes the evening party: an 800-metre ascent over a mere six kilometres, carrying packs that weigh upwards of 20 and 30 kilograms, and – somehow twice in 2014 – all of this during a heat wave.

This is the 'Cocktails on the Castle' event: a trip run by the Australian National University Mountaineering Club (ANUMC), and called by the *Canberra Times* 'Australia's most exclusive cocktail party'.

Back in 1993, the Youth Hostels Association of NSW celebrated its 50th anniversary by proposing a competition: to climb and photograph the summit of 50 famous mountains in the state.

By way of participating in the competition, and inspired by summit dinner parties run by the Sydney Social Climbers in the late 1980s, the inaugural Castle climb was born.

Now very much a tradition, the 20th anniversary of the hike in 2013 was postponed due to bushfires and the ensuing park closure, the anniversary was therefore celebrated in 2014 with two trips up the Castle, unluckily both during particularly warm weather. The late January hike was a gruelling 36 degrees on the main day of walking, while the late summer conditions had left no water at the creek in the saddle.

Similarly, the November ascent was undertaken in 33 degrees, and a 38-degree Sunday inspired a dawn camp departure.

As punishing as the hike sounds, between 10 and 20 people make the ascent every year, with the only injury being a fractured ankle in 1998, and some blood loss due to scrapes and the

infamous leeches of Long Gully.

Yet things don't always run smoothly either, and a previous trip to the Budawangs was attended by a girl who decided to bring all her gear in shopping bags, thinking that they would be easy enough to carry by hand on such a short hike.

This year, she was prepared with a proper pack. Others overestimated their pack carrying abilities: one pack that weighed over 30 kilograms had to give up a few bottles of heavy soft drink so that its bearer would be physically capable of reaching the summit.

The next morning when an unused bottle of soft drink was poured out, the conscripted carrier looked on with understandably narrowed eyes.

Still, in spite of the heat and the weight of the packs, we made it up to the final rock scramble in good time.

While some dozed in the shade, others were taking down old ropes and replacing them with new ones as it has been a club tradition for some years now to install and replace the ropes up the climb, rather than carrying temporary ropes in and out each ascent, with hikers unconnected to our group

giving thanks for the work.

A young Canberra-based scout group passed us at one point; they were one of the smaller groups we'd encountered, giving us an indication of the number of people who would perhaps be unable to reach the summit without the reassurance of the ropes.

It was also a good reminder that we would need to continue carrying in new ropes each year or remove them entirely: we watched as every single person placed their entire weight onto these unknown ropes as they climbed, without ever pausing to test them.

Finally, with the afternoon heat burnt out, we made it to the Castle Plateau.

A separate couple from the Mountaineering Club soon joined us and they had carried their 15-month-old daughter in a harness the whole way.

To say that this couple put the rest of us to shame is something of an understatement, but we didn't dwell on the fact for long. Having made the ascent it was then time to dig out our dresses, heels, tuxedos, bow ties and the waistcoats.

The heat was oppressive for the fully suited men, so the cocktails followed immediately, particularly favouring those with ingredients still half-frozen.

In a nod to the first ginger president of the club since the turn of the century, the theme of the event was 'Red', and the cocktails ranged from El Diablos and Gin-Gin Mules (made with ginger beer) to white wine poured over pomegranate seeds.

With plastic glasses in hand, we made our way to the dramatic edge of the plateau for a brief photo shoot.

These are the photos to inspire people to get outdoors, to experience the Australian landscape, to do the ridiculous. This year's Cocktails on the Castle events were, to say the least, memorable experiences.

With particular thanks to Mika Kontiainen for his help in researching the history of the event.



The first ever Cocktails on the Castle, as organised in *Wilderness* 50, 1993

## SCROGGIN

### New National Park a prime spot for birders

NSW minister for the environment, Rob Stokes chose the beginning of the IUCN World Parks Conference in November as the platform to announce the purchase of 1,700 hectares of wetland in the Clarence River floodplains and declare it a new National Park dubbed, Everlasting Swamp. The area is an important habitat for broilgas among other wetland species.

### Bushwalking Australia's submission on Kakadu plan

The sixth draft management plan for Kakadu National Park has been issued by the Australian National Parks Service and is available for public comment until the end of January. As such, president of Bushwalking Australia, Chris Towers has made clear his intention to issue a submission on behalf of any bushwalkers or bushwalking clubs that care to participate.

### Man lost in Lerderderg State Park for 3 days

A man in his 30s spent three days lost inside Lerderderg State Forest, Victoria after leaving his home without food, water or weather-appropriate clothing. Without a telephone, the man was eventually discovered by bushwalkers in an inaccessible area of the forest from which he was rescued by helicopter. The man was taken to the Alfred Hospital to be treated for hypothermia.

### UNSW creates record-breaking solar cells

Researchers from the University of NSW converted over 40 per cent of sunlight hitting a solar system, the highest efficiency yet recorded and independently verified by the US-based National Energy Laboratory. The work was funded by the Australian Renewable Energy Agency with the hope of implementation in energy-generating 'power towers'.

### Tassie eco-tourism plan's staunch opposition

Pitched as a game-changer for Tasmania's 'job-starved economy', the state government has made it clear that it's open season for development by tourism operators within the state's national parks and World Heritage sites (see Wild 144). Greens leader Christine Milne has warned that this could open a new 'environmental battleground' with many interest groups already beginning to voice their displeasure.

Scotts Point Paddle, QLD, Jan 8  
Grade 1 paddle with the Queensland Sea Kayak Club that presents a good opportunity to get up close with sea turtles and dolphins.  
[qldeaseakay.canoe.org.au](http://qldeaseakay.canoe.org.au)

Bogong to Hotham Rooftop Run, VIC, Jan 11  
64km ultramarathon run from Mountain Creek Campground to Mt Hotham summit. [sites.google.com/site/bogong2hotham](http://sites.google.com/site/bogong2hotham)

Adventurethon Kalbarri, WA, Jan 24  
Multisport challenge incorporating paddling, mountain biking and trailrunning that takes in the surroundings of Kalbarri National Park, WA. [adventureace.com.au](http://adventureace.com.au)

TreX Oceania Cross-triathlon, NSW, Feb 28-Mar 1  
Contenders will visit the Snowy Mts to attempt a 1500m swim, 30km mountainbiking and 10km trail run for a share in \$40,000.  
[tre-x.com.au](http://tre-x.com.au)

3-day Wilderness First Aid Course, WA, Feb 28-Mar 2  
The Bibbulmun Track Foundation is hosting a wilderness first aid course,

aimed as an introductory course for bushwalkers, climbers and paddlers.  
[bibbulmuntrack.org.au](http://bibbulmuntrack.org.au)

Antimony Mine - Pyreates State Forest, Jan 17  
A geological walk, 10km and rated medium, which explores the antimony mine north of Melton and west of Toolom Vale.  
[meltonbushwalkers.org.au](http://meltonbushwalkers.org.au)



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# Bush therapy benefits may raise park valuations

An increasing amount of research and interest from community groups may be pivotal in ensuring Australia's wilderness areas gain the level of management and protection they deserve.

GP and biodiversity convenor of Doctors for the Environment Australia, Dimity Williams highlighted several key studies (see p12, Wild issue 144), as well as work presented by associate professor Mardie Townsend at the Centre for Adolescent Health and Deakin, which reveals the health benefits presented by spending time in nature.

"These benefits appear to be as readily available to youth as they are to adults," said Williams.

"Nature as therapy is legitimate and there is mounting evidence to suggest it can play a role in the effective treatment of conditions like ADHD in children, as well as other conditions commonly presented by adults." Groups such as the Australian Association for Bush Adventure Therapy Inc. (AABAT) are particularly interested in such research, as they frequently advise outdoor education professionals, counsellors and general educators on how to seek the best results in connecting people with nature.



Rachael Millsom, AABAT  
Photo: Campbell Phillips

Rachael Millsom, Victorian representative for AABAT recently held an information session on 'Mindfulness in Nature' that was attended by around 15 people of various professions, all of whom were keen to share Millsom's techniques with their own clients.

For Millsom, there's an unquestionable relationship between the human mind and

natural places that may seem intangible, but "paying attention in the present moment in nature can help to reconnect you to your core; to what is important," she said.

"Being in the outdoors can promote mindfulness as senses are heightened, this is often heightened when you practice something challenging in the outdoors. "I believe that natural spaces in the outdoors also promote mindfulness because there is less 'stuff' - it is like by shedding or moving away from technology, cars, buildings and so on, it becomes easier to slow down and to connect with the real you."

Not only is it becoming increasingly clear that spending time in nature is good for us, but that in turn may be a good thing for the environment as a new economic argument can be made.

"It's about reexamining the way we value nature," Williams said. "When the health benefits are understood, people will be more likely to want to protect natural places and the government will be able to factor this into budgets more accurately as well."



deu.org.au  
aabat.org.au

60  
Seconds  
with

## Chrissy Grant Founder of CTG Services



**What kind of work is CTG Services involved with?**

We facilitate and organise meetings, workshops and conferences for a wide range of Indigenous organisations and communities as well as being involved with projects such as participating on the national steering committee of the IUCN World Parks Congress. As well as working with my community, Kuku Yalanji in Far North Queensland, wherever and whenever I can, I also work with Indigenous communities nationally regarding land management practices and cultural heritage management. Additionally, I'm involved

with organisations like UNESCO, World Heritage and the Convention on Biological Diversity at an international level.

**How do Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) play a role in conservation of biology and culture?**

IPAs are about giving Indigenous people a chance to get back on country, to get engaged with ranger work and cultural heritage work, whether it be at the commonwealth or state level. Indigenous land management has been the fastest growing employment area for Indigenous people in recent times. IPAs help to connect Indigenous people to their country and helps them to learn more about their

own practices, to learn from the elders who are still on country who pass on the knowledge and skills to those who are engaged in looking after country. Societal pressures and access to technology has seen many young people leave remote areas, but many are starting to return now.

**What do you think about the state of Australia's parks and reserves in general?**

The movement to set aside land for national parks has, generally, come to a standstill. As the IPAs continue to grow, the government has included these within its wider, international protected areas commitments. We would like the Australian government to at least match the growth of protected areas that the Indigenous people have been achieving, rather than continue to rely on them so heavily to meet their international responsibilities and targets. IPAs are currently contributing something like 38 per cent to the national reserve system.

**What about the funding and effective management of Australia's protected areas?**

Many simply don't have the resources to be able to implement any serious management plan. One of the interesting features of IPAs is that they must have a management plan in place and they garner support from the government in order to help implement those plans. In many ways they're more active in preserving biodiversity within their environment than some of our most well known national parks.



environment.gov.au/indigenous/ipa/map.html



# Are you ready for The Explorer Challenge?



## weareexplorers

As of September 2014 year, the online New South Wales-based adventure community We are Explorers has been inviting people to take part in 'The Explorer Challenge'.

The brainchild of events manager Henry Brydon, The Explorer Challenge provides people with yet another good reason to get out and experience the picturesque natural wonders of NSW.

Ultimately, Brydon hopes that as many as 100 people will take part in the competition, which requires entrants to choose a weekend adventure they've never done before, share progress of the adventure via social media, and subsequently piece together an account of the adventure along with images for Brydon's website.

Brydon said he hopes that the challenge will bring together likeminded individuals that share his own passion for the outdoors in NSW.

Having travelled extensively, Brydon eventually settled in Sydney and soon discovered that NSW had "such incredible diversity and opportunity for adventure" that he no longer felt the pull of the travel bug, he told Wild.

"We are Explorers is a grass-roots style movement, primarily aimed at building a community of adventure seekers in NSW who share a passion for the great outdoors and making the most of their time off.

"It's about stepping out of ones comfort zone slightly and having an incredible experience. I hope it becomes a platform for sharing, inspiring and enabling others to follow suit and go explore this incredible state," he said. Brydon said The Explorer Challenge will be not only result in a variety of colourful stories and images of the NSW bush, but there are also a number of prizes up for grabs for those willing to take on the challenge.

"With sponsors including Bear Rentals and Blue Mountains Adventure Company supporting the event, the winners can expect to receive some very choice gear," said Brydon.

The challenge has already garnered interest from NSW-based and interstate adventurers alike, with each entry more imaginative than the next.

Standouts include the treks up Mount Solitary and a snow hike on Mount Kosciuszko, while the 'Pirates of the Ku-Ring Gai' paddled Cowan Creek in the cheapest inflatable rafts available.

The photography presented thus far appears to be of a high standard, while the written submissions are often as humorous as they are gritty.

The following is an excerpt from the first challenge completed: 'The Snow Hike to Kosciuszko' by Paddy Aicken.

*On the peak we were told that the trail we'd intended taking towards Seamans Hut was getting a bit sloppy as the late season snow started to melt. This advice turned out to be the best we could have received as we turned away from the snow poles and up onto the ridgeline where few other people had been recently. Away from the touristy tracks the snow was crisp and clear of tracks and before long we found ourselves a campsite on the ridge too good to pass up so we set up our tents, gawped at the astounding beauty of the location we were to call home for the night and before long found ourselves waist deep in the snow with shovels and saws in an impromptu igloo making lesson before retiring very early to bed.*

In order to reach the goal of 100 unique challenges complete by the middle of 2015, Brydon hopes for word of mouth to create a groundswell of interest both online and off. "The entries we've had so far are great and I'm certain we'll have more unique stories being submitted over the summer holidays," he said. "I'm really looking forward to some of the adventures people come up with."

As well as having the chance to win prizes from Bear Rentals and Blue Mountains Adventure Company, the top 100 entrants will receive a free six-month subscription to Wild, with finalists also getting a chance to have their adventure featured in the magazine.



[weareexplorers.com.au](http://weareexplorers.com.au)

### TO GET INVOLVED:

- Decide on an outdoor adventure that excites you, then pledge your idea on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram with a photo and hashtag #weareexplorersNSW
- Your weekend adventure should be something you've never done before, and take place somewhere in NSW
- Go with as few or as many people as possible. Encourage your mates and colleagues to get involved
- Share your progress, updates and photos with the hashtag #weareexplorersNSW
- Once completed, write a short story on your adventure and send it with three photos to Henry Brydon ([henry@weareexplorers.com.au](mailto:henry@weareexplorers.com.au)) for promotion via the website and to enter the draw to win adventure prizes



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**1 Buttermilk from \$231**

Super strong and extremely light, the Buttermilk from Boreas comes in 2 sizes and 2 colours, features a rain cover and comes hydration compatible. [zenimports.com.au](http://zenimports.com.au)

**2 ImageView 8x30mm \$339**

Bushnell combines the power of field binoculars with a 12MP digital camera that also takes 1280x720 HD video; perfect for wildlife photos. [tascocom.au](http://tascocom.au)

**3 Kingy Kayak (inc. paddle) \$838.98**

Perfect for family weekenders, this kayak from Cool Water weighs 22kg and includes 2 fishing rod holders, padded seats and 2 8" storage hatches. [kangaroointercity.com.au](http://kangaroointercity.com.au)

**4 All Terrain Mattress from \$139**

A fully bonded, self-inflating mattress in three sizes, measuring up to 195x130x95cm and designed to fit most single, king or double swags and camp stretchers. [darchoe.com.au](http://darchoe.com.au)

**5 SCS 2001 \$189.99**

A solar powered telescopic tent pole that outputs 250 lumens when set to max. Designed to work in conjunction with Doble's new Solar Camping System range. [dobleoutdoors.com](http://dobleoutdoors.com)

**6 Biodegradable Camper Set \$54.90**

A fully biodegradable eating set from Ecosouille includes a plate, bowl, cup and one 3-piece cutlery set with carabiner. [ecosouille.com](http://ecosouille.com)

**7 OP Futura Vario 50+10 \$319.99**

Weighing 22.4kg, this trekking rucksack from Deuter is designed for the serious adventurer and includes a separate bottom compartment, detachable rain cover and is hydration system-compatible. [velivita.com.au](http://velivita.com.au)

**8 TevaSphere Versa \$119.95**

Named for the spherical heel, this sandal is designed to provide natural, stable motion without sacrificing its light weight, it's waterproof and fully adjustable. [teva.com](http://teva.com)

**9 Nikon D750 \$2399.95**

Latest in Nikon's DSLR range includes a 24.3MP CMOS sensor and a huge effective ISO range (100-12800), while autofocus mode and in-camera processing means anyone can take pro shots. [mynikonlife.com.au](http://mynikonlife.com.au)

**10 Women's Agnes Pant \$90**

Featuring hidden waist adjustment and security pockets, this lightweight (310g), quick-drying garment is designed with active women in mind. [gondwanaoutdoor.com](http://gondwanaoutdoor.com)

**11 Roamer 4 Person Tent \$399.98**

This warm weather 4 person tent features an easy pitch 2 pole design, flame-retardant fly, integrated storage pockets and 3 external doors. [kathmandu.com.au](http://kathmandu.com.au)

**12 Reversible Cast-iron Griddle \$79**

A double-sided cooking plate with a ribbed surface is perfect for grilling over an open campfire at your family camping ground. [manlaw-bbq.com.au](http://manlaw-bbq.com.au)



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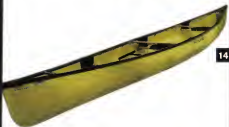
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**13 Static V LUXE XL \$129.50**

At a size of 193x76x8cm, this large sleeping mat from Klymit is designed for two sleepers who should be able to inflate it in just 10-15 breaths each via the dual mouthpieces. [wiidearth.com.au](http://wiidearth.com.au)

**14 Solo Plus \$3125**

Constructed in ultra-light Kevlar (weight: 18kg), this tandem canoe can also be paddled solo with the help of a centre seat, with the hull shape based on the popular 'Prism' canoe. [paddletopartagecanoes.com.au](http://paddletopartagecanoes.com.au)

**15 Bonatti WP Jacket \$199.99**

Light, breathable and protective, this activewear jacket from Salomon packs down into its own chest pocket for portability on the run. [salomon.com.au](http://salomon.com.au)

**16 Tanamai Lightweight Trek Sock \$19.99**

This lightweight sock is designed for warm weather adventures and includes 45% Aussie merino, ankle and foot compression zones and a seamless toe. [xtm.com.au](http://xtm.com.au)

**17 Ambit3 Sport Sapphire \$599.99**

This GPS sports watch from Suunto aims to deliver performance and style, featuring heart rate monitoring and mobile connectivity. [suunto.com/en-AU](http://suunto.com/en-AU)

**18 Bamboo Socks \$15.95**

With 90% bamboo and just 10% spandex, this sock is designed to provide moisture-wicking qualities, superior softness and, being mostly bamboo, it's also eco-friendly. [wildernesswear.com.au](http://wildernesswear.com.au)

**19 Scrubba Wash Bag \$64.95**

Award-winning product for campers, the Scrubba wash bag is said to provide a machine quality wash for clothing in 30 seconds using just 2-3L of water. [thescrubba.com](http://thescrubba.com)

**20 Riva Peak Mid eVent \$299.95**

With a waterproof outer, shock absorbing heel and full-grain leather lining, this hiking boot is designed to be as comfortable as it is hardy. [paddyballin.com.au](http://paddyballin.com.au)

**21 Tungsten 1P \$349.95**

New for 2015, this 3 season solo tent from Marmot includes pre-bends and clip placement for added internal volume. See our Tried & Tested section for the full review. [allsports.com.nz](http://allsports.com.nz)

**22 Xenon Bifocals \$129.95**

Ugly Fish's new range of adventure sunglasses includes a bifocal option in three magnifications and two colour options in the anti-scratch, polarised lenses. [uglyfish.heyewear.com](http://uglyfish.heyewear.com)

**23 Tardis Sleeping Bag \$249.98**

A double bag designed for couples, it can also zip down into two separate bags and features hang loops for easy drying/airing. [kathmandu.com.au](http://kathmandu.com.au)

**24 PowerAll Supreme \$199.95**

Arriving January, this little device is powerful enough to jump start a car but will also recharge a phone, with a max output of 600amps and standby battery life of six months. [repcos.com.au](http://repcos.com.au)

## Ground beetles *Family: Carabidae*

Carabidae, commonly referred to as ground beetles, make up a large proportion of Coleoptera (beetles) that can be found in Australia and also around the world. Most are comparatively small in size however in Australia we are lucky to have three of the largest species: *Hyperion schroetteri*, *Mecynognathus damelii* and *Catadromus* sp. With *Hyperion schroetteri* growing in excess of eight centimetres.

It is very rare that an insect can inflict pain and injury upon humans, however when picked up these large species can protest with a good bite that may draw blood and cause mild discomfort, as some unwitting entomologists have found out recently. Most species inhabit the forest floor among leaf litter and under logs; yet Australia also has species that reside in desert country, in remote places like Bourke and Round Hill in New South Wales where they can be found freely roaming around at night. These beetles tend to be most active in the desert regions preceding and following heavy rainfall that brings out food sources such as snails and also other invertebrates that require moisture to be alive.

Those that reside on the coast have similar habits, and on an ideal night one can regularly see *Pumilus* sp. squabbling and fighting over worms and other food sources on forest trails. It's quite a sight to see such an animated beetle going about its business.

Ground beetles are generally carnivorous, but a few are omnivorous, with some even being solely herbivorous. It is hypothesised that some of these herbivorous species can have the potential to be agricultural pests, but since our knowledge of the agri-pest ecosystem is limited; we have yet to have confirmation of this.

Many Carabid species have fused elytra (the hardened forewing), which prevent the wing cases opening - thus inhibiting flight and confining them to a mostly ground based existence. But around 25 percent of known Australian species are tree dwelling and quite readily fly into entomologists' light traps, which is how the recent live sighting of *Hyperion schroetteri* occurred.

Carabid larvae are free ranging, and can be found under logs and in dead standing trees where they predate on all manner of food sources, from grubs to worms. There is very little known of most species' life histories, so this is an area that needs work.

Few predators dare to take on Carabids due to their most unpleasant taste and odour, however one devastating issue we are seeing is that cane toads ignore these rules, and happily chew on anything they can find. *Mecynognathus damelii* used to be once common on the Cape York Peninsula, however since the northwards march of the cane toads, we are very rarely encountering this species, and it would be a great shame to lose such a majestic beast.

Bombardier beetles (subfamily Brachininae) are probably the most famous of the Carabidae, being known for their unusual defence mechanism, where they eject a concoction of volatile chemicals that combust, forming a hot liquid ejection to thwart would-be attackers and unwary entomologists alike. Knowing from firsthand experience, the secretions can form blisters and discolouring of the skin, which usually abates in around three days.

Other carabid species carry chemical defences, but deliver them



A fine specimen of a *Catadromus* ground beetle sporting a striking green trim. Photo: Robert Richardson

less dramatically. I recall playing a prank on a fellow entomologist who had never seen a member of the Pausinine family, they can eject a vile acid that smells like vinegar that, when coming in contact with ones nostrils, will linger for a good half hour and cause minor discomfort. At least the sinuses get a good clean! Most hikers and campers will encounter ground beetles at some stage in their outdoor adventures; in most cases this will be a fleeting glimpse during the day, however nighttime is the best time to find these fascinating creatures. All you need is a torch and a set of keen eyes, walking up and down forest trails you will usually encounter members of the family.

It is on the outskirts of Sydney a few years back that the entomology world was abuzz, where we were lucky to encounter a living, and slightly "agro" specimen of *Hyperion schroetteri*, arguably the world's largest Carabid. Having not been sighted by entomologists in the last 40 years, this event was considered very special and most excellent to confirm the current existence of this majestic species in the Sydney basin.

Not all beetles are black and drab, Carabids are a diverse group, with many that have lovely colours, from metallic blues to reds and even solid greens, you can spend a lifetime looking at all of them. So get out there and see what you can find.



**Andreas Urban**

A Sydney-based student, Andreas specialises in the study of Coleoptera (beetles) and Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths).



[ento.csiro.au/education/insects/coleoptera\\_families/carabidae.html](http://ento.csiro.au/education/insects/coleoptera_families/carabidae.html)

Curious about a plant or animal you've spotted?  
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# Australia fares poorly in conservation stakes

A recent study conducted by the IUCN, BirdLife International and CEFE has found wealthy nations aren't performing when it comes to conserving biodiversity, and Australia is one of the top eight offenders. While almost all countries contributed negatively to global biodiversity trends as measured by the IUCN Red List, those eight nations – Australia, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Indonesia, Malaysia and the US – are responsible for over half of all

downgrades in the conservation status of vertebrate species.

"We were surprised to find that two of the world's wealthiest nations – the United States and Australia – are among the worst performers," said Ana Rodrigues, co-author of the study for CEFE.

Simon Stuart, another co-author and member of the IUCN, highlighted the efforts of nations "such as the Cook Islands, Fiji, Mauritius, Seychelles and Tonga" that

have focused their efforts in preserving biodiversity.

"That nations... have been able to reverse the extinction crisis in their countries demonstrates how effective conservation actions like invasive species eradication, bio-security, management of protected areas, and ecosystem restoration can be."

The paper resulting from the study was published in the online journal PLOS ONE in November.

# 80,000 birds crowdsourced in one week

Last October produced a first for National Bird Week with the introduction of the Aussie Backyard Bird Count.

The aim was to have as many backyard enthusiasts as possible spotting birds and recording their sightings via a customised mobile application.

Over 21,000 checklists were sent in,

equating to 800,000 sightings of native birds such as noisy miners (*Manorina melanoccephala*), magpies (*Cracticus tibicen*) and galahs (*Eolophus roseicapilla*).

Editor of Australian BirdLife magazine, Sean Dooley was especially pleased by the result.

"Not only have we received an overwhelming quantity of data in terms of bird sightings,

we have also received some truly great stories about the birds that share Aussie backyards," he said.

Hailed as a demonstration of the power of citizen science, the data will be analysed by BirdLife Australia (the event organiser) with the aim of producing an annual report to help monitor avian species.

# Fears WA quokkas to be "incinerated"

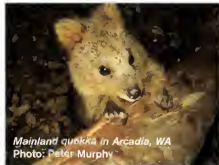
Locals of the Arcadia region of Wellington Forest fear a rare colony of mainland quokka (*Sturnia brachyura*) will be "incinerated" following plans to log the area have been approved by the Western Australian government.

12 individuals are believed to be residing in the area outside of Collie, WA – one of just four colonies known to exist in an area where quokkas were once common.

However, the Forest Products Commission, which is responsible for logging proposals in the state, has said that appropriate measures have been undertaken to ensure their survival.

Peter Murphy of the Preston Environment Group that runs a non-profit organisation, Quokka Rescue, believes this represents a conflict of interest as a result of mismanagement from the state government. "The Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPAW) once had a much larger presence within the forest, but since the mining boom has begun to wane it seems they're turning a lot of conservation decisions over to the Forest Products Commission, whose mandate it is to log as much wood as they can manage."

DPAW recently conducted a survey of the area prior to the logging proposal's release,



Mainland quokka in Arcadia, WA  
Photo: Peter Murphy

which is how the quokkas' existence was confirmed.

DPAW has a 'Quokka Recovery Plan', but Murphy says that fears of total incineration during post-logging operations are well founded.

"The standard procedure following any logging activity is to put down 'regeneration fires'," he explains. "While some small reserves are left behind by the logging, all of the forest will be burned in the subsequent fires and I don't see how the quokkas will survive that."

Ongoing habitat fragmentation means the last mainland colonies are becoming increasingly isolated and therefore more vulnerable to being wiped out.



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Chief executive of the Foundation for Australia's Most Endangered Species (FAME), Cheryl Hill discusses some of the issues involved in reintroducing quolls to South Australia's Flinders Ranges



Cheryl Hill, FAME

FAME's project to reintroduce the locally extinct western quoll to the Flinders Ranges has attracted some criticism following the publication of several stories on the matter (including one in *Wild* issue 144). For the most part, the publicity has been positive, with coverage focusing on the 60 or so offspring produced thus far. Some coverage made mention of the losses we faced,

particularly in the early releases, where a number of animals were likely killed by cats and foxes in the area of Wilpena Pound. We have been transparent about this fact and the threat these feral species represent to the quolls has featured heavily in our planning from the beginning.

The quoll population in Western Australia is self-sustaining and has even increased over the past 17 years – this is generally accepted to have occurred in the presence of cats. It is understood quolls can tolerate some cats, but not foxes. This is why fox baiting has been a big focus of any management program (the bait's main ingredient is naturally occurring in WA vegetation and quolls are largely immune to it). Prior to our release, the WA Western Quoll Recovery Team

inspected the Flinders release site and approved it as suitable. This decision was based on suitability of the habitat and the fact there would be ongoing fox control. Wilpena National Park has been fox baited for 20 years and fox numbers are said to be 'negligible'.

Despite our best planning and research it has become apparent that cats are proving to be a problem: they are responsible for all but one of the 12 quoll deaths that occurred since reintroduction in April. Importantly, quolls have been taken by cats at just one of two release sites – the site closest to the nearby resort and camping facilities. Animals released at the other site, which is much rougher terrain, give us hope that we can continue to improve our methods of reintroduction to minimise the unexpected threat of cats.

If we can find the solution to the cat problem, or a way to ensure vulnerable wildlife can be protected to the point of maintaining sustainable populations while managing the presence of cats, it will be a huge win for wildlife. In the short term we must assume cats are here to stay, and are working hard to find a way for some species to co-exist. The alternative is an environment characterised by birds, kangaroos, koalas and possums. I worry that there are many Australians who already think that's what the Australian bush is, and I want to change that if I can.

## Woodchips

### NSW butterfly gains endangered status

The IUCN has added the black grass-dart butterfly (*Ocybadistes knightorum*) to its Red List, which categorises the species as endangered. This has occurred as a result of ongoing population decline as caused by the proliferation of introduced weeds and coastal developments. However, a significant portion of this insect's range has protected area status, causing the IUCN to call for more effective management of parks and reserves.

### Dead croc raises questions

A 1.2-metre crocodile was discovered near a small pond at Ruffey Lake Park in Doncaster, Victoria, after Andrew Wallis, a wildlife photographer, happened to smell a 'pungent odour' as he walked the track nearby. While Wallis believes the deceased reptile was a pet that had been released, the carcass' proximity to a rubbish-choked pond may suggest it was already dead at the time it was dumped.

### Rejuvenating Australia's southern seascapes

Over a century of dredge fishing in Port Phillip Bay has destroyed shallow shellfish reefs in the area, but a new partnership hopes to turn the situation around. The Nature Conservancy, Fisheries Victoria and the Albert Park Yachting and Angling Club have committed to a three-year pilot plan in which they hope to begin restoring oyster reefs, which in turn should act to filter the water and support other marine species. The first two reefs are planned for Geelong and Hobsons Bay and are budgeted at \$270,000 in total.

### Secure future for marine park

The final management plan for Eighty Mile Beach Marine Park was released in early December, 2014 and provides a framework for a jointly managed space that will support both the native wildlife and local Indigenous culture. Covering 200,000 hectares, it's the thirteenth marine park established in WA and plays a vital role in preserving the ecosystem associated with the Kimberley region. The park is to be managed in partnership by Ngarla, Nyangumarta and Karajarri traditional owners.

### Australian scientist raises alarm over giraffe numbers

The rapid disappearance of wild giraffes had largely gone unnoticed until an Australian conservation scientist began to assess the situation. According to Dr Julian Fennessy, giraffe numbers have dropped by 40% in the past 15 years as a result of bush meat hunting and habitat loss. Fennessy hopes his work will help provide a clearer picture of why these animals are in decline as well as raising awareness for the issue.

Photo: Greg Snell





## Bob Brown's green living

Bob Brown returns to the matter of Lake Pedder, an environmental concern that should have been solved decades ago.



The 2014 Environmental Film Festival Melbourne featured the new US epic *DamNation*. It has just replayed to a full house at Hobart's State Theatre. If it shows near you, don't miss it (or the 2015 EFFM)! *DamNation*, presented by the ethical company Patagonia, is an exploration of the deconstruction of two high concrete dams on the Elwha River in Washington state, near Seattle, to enable the legendary salmon run of the Elwha to recover. 99 per cent of the salmon were eliminated when the dams obstructed the river in the 1920s. Now those dams are gone. The Snake River dams will be next. The film shows campaigners eluding authorities to paint giant cracks on other dams which should be removed and, remarkably, the explosions or patient jack hammering of concrete as many more dams are removed from American rivers with the consequent return of life to long-flooded

valleys. In Maine a public subscription of \$24 million has bought three dams for deconstruction from the Penobscot River. One of the most astonishing scenes in *DamNation* is the archival footage of a naked archeologist high up on the wall of Glen Canyon before this remarkable place, upriver of the Grand Canyon and its American Indian paintings, homes (mysteriously abandoned in 1300) and pottery were obliterated in the mid-1900s by the infamous Glen Canyon Dam. The contemporary interview with this feisty woman is riveting, and very funny given the tragic circumstances in which she had to work half a century ago. No Australian dams tragedy, and there are quite a few, is like the obliteration of Tasmania's Lake Pedder by three small concrete or rock-fill dams in 1972. The total destruction of the Lake Pedder National Park caused the first great national environmental furor.

Just yesterday (28 November) I met up with Barbara Ditcham, now in her nineties, at a Hobart shopping centre. Mrs Ditcham is the sister of the fabulous Lake Pedder campaigner Brenda Hean who, along with pilot Max Price, disappeared on a flight from Hobart to sky-write 'Save Lake Pedder' over Canberra in 1972. The conjecture that their plane was interfered with and that they were murdered has never been quashed.

Now the Lake Pedder Restoration Committee

is working to have the flooding of the lake and its famous pink sandy beach, 300 metres high between the Frankland Range and the peaks of the Coronets, reversed. Every day that passes sees this prospect becoming more sensible and realistic. These days the tiddle of electricity generated from the waters impounded over Lake Pedder goes up the Bass Strait cable to help meet peak load demand for Melbourne breakfasts and dinners. It would be readily replaced by a modern solar power station in Victoria or a modest fair dinkum energy efficiency program.

Two decades ago, federal backbencher Tony Abbott recognised the original Lake Pedder as an international treasure and called for it to be restored (*The Australian*, 9 January 1995). Mr Abbott wrote: 'Draining Lake Pedder may be good politics as well as good sense. Distaste for extreme green demands is no reason to reject sensible parts of their agenda ... a federal government could commission a definitive cost-benefit study and, given a favourable result, to fund the restoration as an important national project. Tasmanians may be hard to convince, but that's no reason not to try'. Here's one Tasmanian, amongst many, who won't be hard to convince. How exciting is the prospect: now that Mr Abbott is Prime Minister, the dream of recovering Lake Pedder has taken a giant step towards realisation - hasn't it?

## Benambra mine threatens Gippsland Lakes region

In East Gippsland, a copper and zinc mine previously in operation for just four years, from 1992-6, is scheduled for development by the Independence Group NL (ASX: IGO) over the next five years.

Dubbed The Stockman Project, the development proposal was approved by the state's planning minister, Matthew Guy in October, 2014.

Local conservation groups are working hard to raise awareness, particularly around concerns regarding the reopening of the mine's tailings dam, which was rehabilitated by the state

government at a cost of \$7 million in 2006. The existing tailings dam, which is located on a tributary of the Tambo River east of Benambra, already contains tonnes of heavy metal tailings and a further seven million tonnes may be added with the proposed mining development. Secretary of the Gippsland Environment Group, Louise Crisp is calling for support, saying: "There is a massive potential for this tailings dam to leach dangerous substances and given its location on the headwaters of the Tambo River, if the dam wall failed thousands of people

around the Gippsland Lakes who would be directly impacted, before you even begin to consider environmental consequences." The dam was originally built on a rare montane swamp that is listed to under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity (EPBC) Act 1999. Any heavy metal leaching would likely affect ground and surface water throughout the region, wreaking havoc on agriculture, tourism and the local ecosystem.



geg.org.au

# Catchment-22

Infrastructure like the Tallowa Dam has well known implications for ecosystems, but solving the problem is proving a challenge, writes **Cody Hartz**

Completed in 1976, Tallowa Dam sits just below the confluence of the Shoalhaven and Kangaroo Rivers, creating Lake Yarrunga. Now, 40 years after construction of the dam, locals are wondering if it's fundamentally changing the ecosystem in this pocket of Morton National Park.

On their website, the Sydney Catchment Authority (SCA) calls Tallowa 'the Centrepiece of the Shoalhaven System.'

However, an opinion piece in the *Kangaroo Valley Voice* (the local monthly newsletter) called it a 'Berlin Wall for fish,' describing it as an impediment between the native species that were once abundant in the upper reaches of the rivers and their spawning habitats downstream.

Perhaps even more striking than the suggestions about what the dam is doing to the local environment is the grandly imagined, yet poorly executed, fishway system that the SCA and NSW Department of Primary

Industries retrofitted on the dam in an attempt to restore habitat continuity.

## Damming effect on ecosystems

The most impressive component of Tallowa Dam is the hydroelectric power and pumping station - a conspicuous piece of soviet-era architecture hidden in the bush on the northeastern edge of Morton National Park - but there are also the clear-cuts for the network of pipelines, powerlines and transmission towers, the electrical transformers and substations.

Infrastructure for Tallowa Dam has directly limited and fragmented the habitat of the brush-tail rock-wallaby, which is now in danger of extinction, while clear-cut power lines and utility corridors also provide easy travelling conditions for nonnative hunters like foxes and feral cats, which could explain the declining number of other threatened animals like quolls, bilbies, and koalas in the region.

According to a report compiled in 2001 for the SCA and the Department of Primary Industry (DPI), 'since completion of Tallowa Dam in October 1976, the migration of fish within the Shoalhaven catchment has been obstructed ... [the dam] prevents a large proportion of species from using up to 75 per cent of available habitat within the river channel.'

This is troubling when you consider that, according to the same report, 'migratory fishes represent 96 per cent of the native freshwater fishes potentially occurring in the catchment.'

It goes on to state: 'twenty-three years after construction of the dam, no diadromous species, that is, fish that migrate between freshwater and the sea, exist naturally within Lake Yarrunga and the upper reaches of the Shoalhaven and Kangaroo Rivers except for those species capable of climbing the dam wall.'

Species that are now locally extinct, include,



The Tallowa Dam has been called the Berlin Wall for migratory fish species  
Photo: Cody Hartz



but are not limited to: Australian bass, Australian grayling, striped mullet, freshwater mullet, freshwater herring, striped gudgeon, empire gudgeon, short-headed lamprey, common galaxias and bullrouts. The sheer number of fish that are adversely impacted upon by the dam (96 per cent) presents a dire threat to the integrity of the food web.

Anecdotal evidence also suggests that a lack of competition from endemic fish has allowed population of carp to grow exponentially in recent years.

Schools of the introduced species have been observed in the headwaters and feeder creeks of the Kangaroo River, and as far upstream in the Shoalhaven River as Bugonia State Conservation Area.

Since carp thrive in warm slow moving water—like the marshy shallows at the edge of a lake—altering the natural features of the rivers has likely contributed to the proliferation of the pest.

In a phone interview, Dr Peter Gehrke, the lead author of the 2001 report for the SCA/DPI, commented that "there would be far less habitat for carp if the dam wasn't there."

With respect to the concept of trophic cascade, Gehrke said: "this sort of thing can and does happen, but it is usually very poorly documented ... especially in Australia."

Gehrke also confirmed that carp have an effect on the breeding and nesting habitat of water birds by causing damage to wetland habitats.

Because of the lack of research, there are questions that attend a carp invasion for which answers aren't readily available.

For instance, if carp raise the turbidity levels in a body of water while simultaneously changing nutrient and oxygen levels, what might be their effect on platypus? Could riparian plant life be damaged? Is the entire native food web at stake?

#### A fishy band-aid

In 2009, at a cost of \$26 million, improvements were made to the dam in an attempt to turn back time with the state's water minister, Phill Costa, calling the project: "a direct investment into improving the health of this vital river system."

Engineers and biologists hoped they could re-establish a migratory passage for native fish, an ecological interruption that had lasted over 30 years already.

To do this they designed a novel, two-part fishway system where the most notable component is the "fish elevator."

When it was first proposed, the fishlift was hailed as an innovative solution to a problem that was, presumably, never considered when the dam was erected.

Commissioned in August of 2009, it was only the second fishway of its kind in Australia, but just a short time after it was first turned on, the system began breaking down.

In a letter published in the *Kangaroo Valley Voice* (April, 2010), Catherine Cusack—then shadow minister for Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability for the NSW Legislative Council—claimed that the fishlift had been broken for five months.

Cusack also used the letter as an opportunity to do some political finger pointing, saying: "sadly for taxpayers, there is more money than water pouring over the Tallowa Dam spillway."

"You could pay someone with a fish net \$500 a week for 1,000 years and it would have been cheaper ... The State Labor Government must release any reports on the lift's performance and give an assurance that it is not killing endangered species."

From her letter it's less than clear how a malfunctioning fishlift is a partisan issue, but her claim that the new fishway had suffered a prolonged shutdown less than three months after it was commissioned seem to be legitimate, corroborated by stories published in *The South Coast Register* and on the ABC News website form around the same time. Mechanical issues continue to plague the fishlift and it's regularly out of order months at a time.

At the site of the dam there are lots of placards explaining how the fishway works, full-color information boards with pictures and descriptions of the various species of fish it's designed to save, but there is little action. Local fishermen say that they remember the fishlift was running at some point, but not lately and never consistently.

At the time of writing (late November) a maintenance log from the SCA's media liaison reveals the fish lift has been inoperable for the last 17 months.

In the five years since the opening ceremony the system has been shut down for a total of 41 months. In 2012 it only ran for a short period of time during the January and September.

Cusack's suggestion regarding the man with the bucket may not only be cheaper, but, as a way of reestablishing habitat continuity in the Shoalhaven catchment, it may also be more effective.



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**"I guess my feet know where they  
want me to go . . ."**

**JAMES TAYLOR 'COUNTRY ROAD'**

*There's a cadence present in every aspect  
of nature, but often this is overlooked in  
favour of man-made rhythms*

*Photos: Quentin Chester*



## Sound Tracks

**An immersive nature experience may often demand silence, but *Quentin Chester* finds that it can inspire musical outbursts as well**

Our bush our thoughts wander. By some fluke of physiology, going on foot messes with your head.

It dislodges stuff. Whatever the destination, we find daydreams and strands of memory coming the other way. Such diversions allow us to lose entire afternoons in a loopy free-association of ideas. At other times the bounce of our stride or the sway of the moment can lull us into other rhythms.

A few months back I was dawdling up a valley near Arkaroola in the northern Flinders Ranges. It was early on a placid, overcast morning with not much happening. All I had to worry about was an ambling path, some distant hills and a soft breeze in the mallee scrub. Then, out of nowhere, I'm blurting out: "Take to the highway, won't you lend me your name? Your way and my way seem to be one and the same."

Mercifully I was alone; no one else had to endure my little quavering flurry of sounds. Such outbursts always catch me by

surprise. I'm left wondering – "Where did that come from?" It's a bit of a mystery. Especially for someone who'd prefer to pour molten wax down their undies rather than watch a musical. Then again, maybe it's simply instinct. Maybe certain moods lead inescapably to a mash-up of notes and melody.

What those moods might be is, by definition, hard to put into mere words alone. On my Arkaroola morning I guess it was about a lightness of spirit, that loping scatty feeling that comes with a rolling gait and a kind of mindlessness. Mr Taylor's 'Country Road' drifts off into a chant-like refrain. On paper the words are nothing. But trailing out from the song's end they feel about right: "Walk on down, walk on down, walk on down, walk on down, walk on down the country road . . . Na na na na na na na na na na na, country road, yeah, walking on a country road . . ."

For me James Taylor's wistful tunes have been a dependable echo of this wandering

head space. And I've stayed loyal to his crooning long after my peers discarded him as old hat and irredeemably uncool. As it turns out JT's got a whole suite of songs that resonate with the laid-back longing to be out there, shambling free with the nameless urge to move on: "So don't you let that yearning pass you by. Walking man, walking man walks. Any other man stops and talks. But the walking man walks."

I remember those lines from 'Walking Man' echoing in my ears as I trotted along a ridge above Nepal's Arun Valley. That was nearly 30 years ago on a trek to Mount Everest. The music came, appropriately enough, from an old Sony Walkman. For all the gob-smacking spectacle of rhododendron forests and gawking at the highest peaks on earth, this frolic did take nearly a month. And not just on any old tracks but some of the longest, steepest footpaths going Walking day in and day out. With the same group of people. Six hours a day.

We're meant to spend such times in the wild in a state of attentive, blissed-out reverence. But the truth is there are always phases when flogging along on foot becomes a drudgery. Moments overloaded by the repetitive, sinewy toil of it all. Or maybe we just need to switch off, be it to block out chatty travelling companions or hide from our own thoughts.

That was certainly the case through those weeks heading to Everest. I had just three cassettes for the Walkman. They included a Van Morrison compilation, plus some Talking Heads and Dire Straits. But it was the James Taylor tape that got the biggest workout. It featured an old live concert I'd recorded off the radio. So as well as the cosy familiarity of his ballads there was the sensation of drifting into the shambolic energy of a live show. Plodding along behind luggage-laden yaks, I was off in my own little rocking shed of sound.

There's a long tradition of music in the bush. In the good old days people used to warble away around the campfire. No scout outing was complete without the nightly ritual of knobby kneed kids being goaded into singing 'Ging Gang Goolie', 'Kumbaya' or 'Quartermasters Store'. Halfway down the backyard at the home of the late, great Paddy Pallin there was a fireplace and small stone amphitheatre. Here the man himself would hold forth with his croaky sing-alongs, recreating in suburban Lindfield the kind of humble 1930s bush camaraderie he always cherished.

During the great folk music scare of the 1970s every campfire had somebody plunking away on a guitar or a Bob Dylan wannabe wailing into a smoky campfire. And through the 1980s entire summers passed at Mount Arapiles with the rock climber's camp echoing to the din of Neil Young thrashing his electric guitar. That was sort of a given. If you pitched your tent in the pines you knew you'd wake to somebody's Datsun 180B and Gemini wagon booming away with Out of the blue.

At some point however, music does swamp the very reason for being out there in the first place. In more public locales nerves can get seriously frayed. I remember an evening at a Grampians campground trying to sleep as one set of neighbours whined along to Tammy Wynette while on the other side it was a blasting wall of Nirvana power chords. And there are times when almost any sort of music feels so jangling that it qualifies as a crime against sanity. Like the afternoon I wandered back from Mutjulu Waterhole – one of Uluru's many sublime, sacred places – to a carpark pounding to Ice-T belting from an Impreza's doof-doof speakers.

Of course, out on the open road tucked

within the privacy of your own machine, anything goes. Everyone has their favourite highway tunes, a soundtrack that helps ease away those mind-bleeding hours behind the wheel. Occasionally you get to a place where the music really does join into the spirit of place. I've grown to love slipping along outback dirt roads with Ry Cooder's twanging slide guitar sending notes floating into empty space.

Same goes for Leo Kotke bringing tunes to the boil on his 12-string guitar. There's something about his sound that works for me as the car dips and swoops through a Flinders gorge. I'm also partial to Leo's deep growling moan of a singing voice. When you have a go at harmonising it

practice. The nearest neighbours are a couple of kilometres away. At night we don't hear cars or planes. Instead, I'm waiting for the sound of boobook owls calling to each other across the valley. Or listening to the angle of the wind as it runs along the corrugated sheets of iron on different sides of the shed. Or hearing the soft clump of kangaroos hopping up the grassy mound outside the bedroom's sliding doors. And come morning our alarm is the music of galahs cackling away and carolling magpies.

Deep in the bush this listening is tightly bound to the essence of why I'm there. There's an almost irresistible need to register what's happening. A lot of the time



makes you sound, well, not so bad after all. His 'Tiny Island' is in my repertoire of walking music, those memorised lyrics that come bubbling out when I least expect it: "And everywhere that I keep my silence, no sound returns to me. Just endless waves at the end of our days, the sighing of the seas."

And that's how it goes these days. Music – when it happens – is a spontaneous response, a scrambled set of sounds summoned from memory. I've tried walking with iPods, filling my head with songs and fine concertos. No problem with people who choose to wander about plugged into their ear buds. But drowning out the world just doesn't work for me anymore. I get twitchy. On foot in the bush I have to have my senses plugged into the crackle and buzz of my surroundings.

This is something that has taken hold over time. And since we moved to our cabin in the woods, it's become a daily

it's about trying to recognise birdsong and the reassurance of knowing what's busily alive around you. That might be the churring of a black-faced cuckoo shrike or the chatter of wrens and thornbills.

But there are always sounds on the edge one's knowledge, calls and rustles that feed the urge to discover more and dig deeper. In that way the outdoors becomes less about going places and doing things than simply feeling connected. Even in virtual silence there's still the crackle of grass underfoot or the rhythm of boots hitting creek bed stones. To walk is to compose. You're scratching out your own unfinished symphony. And for me that feels like music to my ears. Or as Mr Taylor would have it: *Keep me walking, October road. Keep me walking in the sunshine, yeah. A little friend of mine, October road.* **W**

A contributor since *Wild* issue 3, Quentin Chester is the author of several books about wild places. [quentinchester.com](http://quentinchester.com)



# Following The Snow Leopard

*Geoff Robb* explores the regions of northwest Nepal as described in Peter Mattheisson's renowned book

Chris suggested Upper Dolpo, a remote area in northwest Nepal (on the border with Tibet) and Ralph and I latched on to the idea. It appealed because it was not on the main tourist treks, it was a challenging high altitude trek, and we could follow the trail and explore the area around the legendary Shey Gumpa about which Peter Mattheisson had written his extraordinary book *The Snow Leopard*.

We were a little hesitant as the trek required at least 18 days, crossing three 5,000-metre passes, and Chris had already experienced some altitude issues on Mount Kenya earlier in the year. Ralph (at age 64) had peaked some years ago and now had sciatica. However, Mattheisson wrote that since the usurpation of Tibet by the

Chinese, the land of Dolpo was said to be the last enclave of pure Tibetan culture left on Earth and that simple fact made us put our concerns aside.

Shortly after Mattheisson was there in 1973, there was a bloody skirmish between Kampas and Nepali troops near the Tibetan border north of Shey, and the land of Dolpo was closed again to the outside world. Upper Dolpo was only opened for trekking in 1992 and the substantial permit fee of \$500 deters many.

I contacted some sherpa acquaintances to organise support for the trek. Due to other commitments, the three of us would not meet in Kathmandu until October 29, which is very late in the season, and we were risking snow and the onset of winter. Together with our Sirdar Manji, the four of

us flew out to Nepalgunj (almost on the south-western border with India). I knew it was going to be a great trip when I saw Milan at the hotel at Nepalgunj. Milan was our cook on my climb of Baruntse, two years earlier, and he was the best cook I have had in my many trips to Nepal.

We were delayed at Nepalgunj as strong winds prevented flights landing on the upward-sloping, bumpy grass runway at Juphal, where a steep cliff prevents the runway continuing on.

## Lower Dolpo - 4 days

We landed at Juphal with relief that we had really started. I was embarrassed that our support crew totalled six, including two assistant cooks, an assistant sherpa and a horse driver with five horses.





*Trekking towards the Kagmara La (Lower Dolpo region) with views of Kanchauni Lek (6,444 metres) in the distance*  
Photo: Alex Treadway



Perhaps porters may have better supported the local economy, but it would not have been good to have a whole string of them carrying heavy loads on our behalf.

We wanted to take the most direct route to Shey. If we had difficulties on the passes due to the onset of winter, we would know early in the trek.

The trail up the Suli Khola valley seemed to go endlessly up and down. After the village of Chepka, the trail continued through beautiful dense birch forest along the river. The autumn reds and yellows were colourful, as were the many school children were at Sanduwa where we camped.

The fourth day saw us climbing through cedar and pine forest as the trail swung northwards. A long climb with many switchbacks brought us up to Ringmo and the glorious Phoksundo lake.

#### Upper Dolpo - 10 days

Day five was a beautiful day of trekking. For the first hour the path clings to the cliff face just a little above the azure Phoksundo lake. Depending on the sunlight, the lake changes colours from a royal blue to aquamarine to azure to turquoise.

We headed up the hill along the side of the lake, all the time with the majestic lake surrounded by cliffs rising eventually to become snow-capped peaks. The puffing of the chimneys at Ringmo - the gateway to Upper Dolpo - gradually faded as we climbed to 4,100 metres, then gently descended through a birch and pine forest. The autumn colours were still present, but the mass of leaves on the ground indicated the looming approach of winter. We arrived

at the night's campsite and the horses still hadn't caught up. Chris speculated on spending a night without our gear, so he despatched us to all corners of the valley floor to locate wood, as we may have needed a fire to keep warm through the cold evening.

The horses arrived just before dark, having apparently had to reverse down the narrow cliff face path when faced with the laden horses of two Italians (the only other people we met that day).

Only a few wispy clouds around, so day six was another fortunate day for trekking. We were climbing 1,000 metres, so this would be a test for the others as we had given up our first rest day that had been planned to assist with acclimatisation. The birch forest ended as we headed up a gully flanked by sheer cliffs. The tree line ended as we climbed up and up. Ralph's sciatica seemed manageable. Packed lunches for the first time saved the regular two hour-plus stop, which involved Milan first cooking for us, and then the subsequent lunch for the sherpas.

We arrived at our high camp at 4,700 metres. Two hours later the horses were still not in sight and Ralph erupted, concerned about the lack of shelter, food and the creeping cold. When things calmed down, we headed back down to the 4,500-metre camp in the hope that the horses would arrive. We located some overhanging rocks under which to spend the night, but the horses arrived after leaving late and taking the wrong turn down at the start of the canyon. Manji promised to stay behind the horses tomorrow to ensure they arrived at camp before us.

On the next day we headed up the Kang La pass at 5,300 metres and the gradient became very steep for a few hours. We were once again blessed with a bright blue sky. The mountains surrounding the pass are massive brown monoliths devoid of any vegetation. At the edge of the Tibetan high plain with valleys going in every direction, we were well into Upper Dolpo.

As we headed north and upwards, a large family was migrating south to the lower altitudes with their horses and yaks. They were the only people we saw all day. It



A long line of yaks move along a dramatic stretch of trail beside Phoksundo lake  
Photo: Alex Treadway

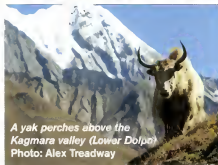
seemed a long walk down the other side of the pass until finally we could see Shey Gumpa, our most important objective of the trek. Our campsite in the valley below looked up at the historic religious building, which was established in the 11th century. The B'on religion in this region preceded Tibetan Buddhism, but subsequently degenerated into a sect of Buddhism. The camp is a cold place as the winds come from the valleys, which lead off in all directions. Little did we realise that, while we had taken three days to get here from Ringmo, Peter Matthiesson had taken eight days on his journey 39 years ago. His porters, locals from Ringmo, had quit three times and finally dumped their loads with still another 1,000 metres to climb up to the pass. Matthiesson had made three carries up the very steep slope to the pass and then slid their supplies down the snow on the other side. He'd also arrived two weeks earlier in the year (late October) than we, but faced deep snows where we did not.

Our itinerary was initially tight, and this was compounded by the loss of the day flying in to Jughal. Now Manji said we needed an extra day to get from Shey to Saldang. As a result, we convinced Manji, even though he had not travelled on it before, to take a shorter route from Saldang to Dho Tarap which would save a couple of days.

Accordingly we could have a rest day in the magnificent panorama of Shey Gumpa with the religious Crystal Mountain overlooking. The assistant lama led us for an hour over the hill and unlocked a lama red painted gumpa, or hermitage for solitude, carved into the cliff. On the walls were paintings similar



Leaving Saldang  
Photo: Geoff Robb



A yak perches above the  
Kagmara valley (Lower Dolpo)  
Photo: Alex Treadway

to frescos. Individual wall hangings record the succession of senior lamas at Shey Gumpa since the early 1600s. We saw four blue sheep in the valley below. Matthiesson and his partner George Schaller spent three weeks at Shey studying the blue sheep, which were very numerous then.

My water bottle froze in the tent that night. On day nine, we were heading to Namjung over another 5,000-metre pass. We thought we may be the last of the trekkers for the season, but the weather was again glorious, with rarely a cloud and the occasional refreshing breeze. Chris was suffering from a headache, which was surprising, as we

should have acclimatised by then. The route was a gentle climb up to 5,080 metres - much easier than the pass to get to Shey. The lama from the previous day accompanied us, along with a very small five-year-old boy who he was taking to his mother. She was already in Saldang for the winter. The boy was pointed in the direction of Namjung and skipped up the path on his own for a kilometre before we caught him. He had no problem beating us hardened trekkers to the top of the pass. As there was only a light breeze puffing we had lunch there. The landscape to the north is barren Tibetan hills, but the scenery is entrancing. More of a contrast to the Australian bush couldn't be imagined. Namjung for the evening was at 4,400 metres and surrounded by bleak brown cliff faces.

The following day consisted of a three-hour trek to Saldang. Most of our days had involved six hours walking plus a lengthy lunch stop.

The sky again was clear and the weather crisp and ideal for walking. We heard that the Khumbu in East Nepal was covered with heavy snow, whereas there was none here. Chris's headache eased. Perhaps it was because he had taken my recommendation to observe the local custom and always walk on the left side of the numerous piles of prayer stones? The inscriptions on each stone must have taken months to carve, but they have lasted centuries.

I often walk with music, but the peaceful scenery that morning required no foreign intrusions. I have spent six months on mountains in Tibet and watched the rolling hillside of browns and greys, but had never walked through it like I did in that morning's trek. Tibet was only now only 20 kilometres away.

We saw another flock (eight) of blue sheep, but they headed higher up the hillside after detecting our scent and noise. Eagles wheeled above, unfettered.

Locals came out to collect dried yak dung with their wicker baskets on their foreheads, but there were no other travellers. Despite the apparent inhospitable landscape, the locals - whose lineage is from Tibet - all seemed happy and were very friendly, producing a strong "Namaste!" in greeting us. This is said while clapping hands together in prayer format, so the children aren't accustomed to high fives.

We followed the river south but the landscape remained a barren brown. Many houses that we passed seemed like medieval castles as they were perched on prominent points; the main house was square, with square additions and prayer flags and other colourful lineage flags flying from the corners of the flat roofs. It seemed like we were in Tibet, as the men had red braids



Our third 5,000-metre pass  
Photo: Geoff Robb



woven through their long hair. The hills were dry and dusty, and the terraces grey and brown. In spring the landscape would be a mixture of greens and yellows as they grow barley for consumption and trade with China (Tibet).

I had never passed so many imposing stone prayer walls, appearing as they did every 100 metres or so. The ravines were wild, barren places. On the 11th day of our adventure we were bringing up the rear when the horses shot ahead, and it was almost three hours before the boys caught up to the horses. Eventually we camped by the river, annoyed that the horses chose the campsite at 4,200

metres, and so told the horseman that he needed to stick with the horses in future. The three of us headed off on day 12 while the sherpas packed up camp. 45 minutes out and Ralph was ahead while Chris and I hesitated at the valley to our left. We couldn't see any trail and therefore continued up the Nagon Khola on a very well used track. We walked for another one-and-a-half hours until we thought we had arrived at the correct valley on our left, marked with some prayer flags, and crossed the river (later I ascertained that this point was Matthiesson's 'Cairn of skulls' on his arduous return to Ringmo). We didn't have to wait long before

we saw Balzit, and it was a puzzle that he didn't have a wicker basket loaded up from his forehead. Luckily Manji had seen that our tracks had not taken the correct turnoff 45 minutes out from camp and they had come after us. After backtracking for an hour, we then crossed the river and headed up the Dachun Khola. One benefit of backtracking was that we came across a yak train (60-plus yaks) with an extended family in tow. Fags, bright colours, and bells provided a wonderful sight. This group was heading to Ringmo for trading.

The horses and others had waited for us up the valley and we ensured they knew we took full responsibility for wasting two-and-a-half hours and walking an additional eight kilometres. We camped in a nice grassy spot at 4,600 metres rather than the planned 4,750. We felt stupid having earlier ignored the time, distance and altitude (my very old altimeter watch was correct) signs and instead just meandered along the good path. A few dark clouds indicated the possibility of snow on the next day's 5,000-metre pass. As the previous night had been freezing, the boys had the yak dung fire going in the morning and we gathered closely around it before breakfast on day 13. It only took an hour and a half to get up our last pass, the 5,100-metre Jyanta Bhanjyang (although we were expecting 5,221 metres). A long,

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gradual descent down the valley was enhanced with the majestic white massif of the 8,000-metre peak Dhaulagiri directly in our sights. Chris was suffering again from a headache but put it down to dehydration. On the other side of the valley the cliffs seemed similar to the Grand Canyon in Nevada. We didn't even meet any locals until we got down to Tokyu at 4,250 metres (our last planned night over 4,000 metres). I found a local selling expensive Chinese beer that provided a good end to a satisfying day. Our cook, Milan, had provided excellent quality meals on the run. This had been a highlight. He has done a lot of trekking work for Australians and later we unsuccessfully explored assisting him with his desire to come to Australia. In all the villages, we had been surprised by the large number of children playing and that they were happy to see us. They were snotty-nosed but cute. Clearly the Chinese birth control policy had not reached here. We had seen only four Westerners in the last 10 days.

#### Return to Lower Dolpo – 5 days

Heading down to Nawapani (3,500 metres) we met two Swiss doing the Lower Dolpo circuit. The distances and map locations didn't seem to tally. Places in Nepal often have different names and different spelling

I also thought Ralph's sciatica was giving him problems. They had begun building a road from Tarakot to Dunai. It would take at least another seven years to finish. They have "completed" lots of small sections, but there are many uncompleted sections as the track winds along next to the raging river. Any road would destroy the existing culture. Much to our consternation, the horses arrived after dark at Dunai, apparently slowed down as a result of a "lame" horse that had since become "unlame". Dunai is very large, with the main thoroughfare being one continuous line of little shops by the river. We hit civilisation with a bang. Dunai to Juphal is only a short three-hour day on day 18, initially following the path next to the raging torrent downstream but finishing with a 400-metre climb up to the airstrip town. Milan cooked a large meal and cake, with celebrations including toasts and appropriate tips for one of the best treks we have been on. The three of us have done in aggregate at least 100 treks or hikes around the world, and Upper Dolpo ranks at the top of our collective experience.

We were fortunate to fly out from Juphal after waiting a day for the minimal wind to disappear, thereby completing a unique trip. The altitude, sciatica, horses and weather had been kind to us. W

#### NEED TO KNOW

- As with many treks in Nepal, it's advisable to contact a trekking agent in Kathmandu or Australia before you head out. They will organise all aspects of the trip for a flat cost somewhere around \$4,500 and \$5,400, but this can vary depending on the number of people joining your trip.
- Unlike in the Everest region, there are no regular teahouses, so accommodation is provided in the form of tents.
- Likewise, your food and water supplies will be supplied within the cost of your trip as arranged for by the booking agent. This usually includes the provision of a camp cook.
- The Dolpa region remains somewhat of a backwater for now and as such it presents as relatively untouched by local and international governments and cultures. As this will no doubt change in the future, any interested visitors should consider a trip soon, but to be especially respectful of the local people at all times.

# 35

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# SECRETS

## of the stone country

The ancestral heritage of its first inhabitants permeates everything  
*Warwick Sprawson* sees in the heart of Kakadu National Park

The formed track ends at Gubara Pools, a series of spring-fed waterholes on the Baroalpa Creek. Mournful birdcalls whistle and crack in the shady monsoon forest surrounding the pools, while dragonflies chase each other over the surface of the water. If all goes to plan Baroalpa Creek will provide a breach in the escarpment above.

"No water problems here at least," I say, filling my water containers.

"Maybe, but it's what we find up there that counts," Yasmin replies.

It's August, deep in the dry season, and

temperatures are in the low 30s. Although we've planned a six-day hike, we're unsure how much water we'll find further up the creek. And if we can't find more water we will have to turn around and head back.

We follow the creek eastwards over jumbles of boulders and snarls of fallen logs. The footing is treacherous and our packs are heavy, making progress slow. There is a feeling of envelopment as orange cliffs rise beside us and fan palms seal off light from above. In the deep shade hundreds of common crow and blue argus butterflies flutter like a shifting kaleidoscope.

A series of awkward, car-sized boulders require us to remove our packs and heave them over the rocks by hand. With six days' food and seven litres of water each we have to earn every metre gained. A great bowerbird watches our struggles from a nearby branch, head cocked to one side. As I put my pack back on, red-faced and sweating, I brush against a shrub. The bowerbird continues to watch, seemingly astonished, as I hop around swearing and swatting at my face and neck.

"Green ants?" Yasmin asks sympathetically, brushing the insects from my hair. "Funny



Exploring rock formations in the valley  
Photos by: Warwick Sprawson

how they always seem to find you."

"Hilarious. Ow!"

When I've dislodged the last of the ants we continue along the creekbed, slowly gaining elevation as we clamber over boulders, rocks and stone slabs. Although the creek has now stopped flowing, there are still regular pools of water. The small bronze-coloured frogs resting in the shallows leap away at our approach.

After a detour around an impassable wall of rock – surely a spectacular seven-metre high waterfall in the wet season – we stop, look intently at one other, and drop our packs. It doesn't matter that we've only struggled three kilometres from Gubara Pools. There is no doubt that this is the place to camp. A beach of fine white sand fringes a deep waterhole with an inviting jade tinge like thick glass. Around the pool are banks of yellow fairy-apron flowers, hedges of lime green rope-rush and water-smoothed platforms of deep red rock. A single tree, like a palm on a desert island, provides shade on the beach.

After we've pitched our tent on the sand, I leap off a rock into the deep, cool water then float on my back to look at the blue sky. A rainbow bee-eater darts overhead with a flash of orange wings as it plucks an insect from the surface of the pool. A white-throated honeyeater lands on a branch and begins grooming, fussily tugging, fluffing and smoothing its feathers. The sun is warm on my face. This is as idyllic a spot as I can

imagine, a location I know I will return to again and again in my mind when I'm far away, locked in some grey, southern office.

Leaving camp the next morning we disturb a basking water monitor. The monitor leaps into the pool with a loud splash and treads water, glaring at us, until we're safely out of sight.

The walking today is far easier than yesterday, with sandstone platforms along the edge of the creekbed allowing for relatively rapid progress. The sandstone is either a dusty plum or rusty orange colour, its surface often distinctly rippled. The ripples are a reminder that these platforms were formed around 1,700 million years ago when vast waterways deposited sediments across the region, the scour of the water's currents preserved for eternity in the patterning on the rock's surface. While the platforms make for easy walking they are very exposed, and by 10am the heat radiating from the stone is fierce. The brittle smell of dry spinifex suffuses the air.

The further north we go the more the landscape increases in grandeur – everything seems to be getting bigger, bolder and brighter. Even the colours seem richer – the sky a more vibrant blue, the rocks a more intense orange, the spinifex a more vivid green. Intriguing caves and overhangs appear in the orange cliffs lining the creek. If you look long enough, the fissured

pinnacles, hollows, boulders and chasms appear to have some kind of overlying structure. It seems as though there are weathered statues, columns, turrets and lintels in the rock, as if this entire bluff was some terrific crumbling relic, a prodigiously fortified avenue of temples left to fall into ruin. Or maybe I just need to drink some more fluids.

At least we have plenty of water. Although we're carrying our full load of drinking supplies again, our concerns about finding water continue to subside as we come across more waterholes, their contents cool and sweet, with no need for purification. The creekbed branches and we take the more easterly branch, walking across a recent burn, bright green spinifex shoots emerging from the scorched ground. For lunch we take a detour from the broiling creekbed and head for the shade of a nearby cave. The cave resembles a vast auditorium, 40 metres long, its roof, impossibly cantilevered, 10 metres overhead. Shady and cool, catching the breeze that blows down the valley, it makes a wonderful place to rest. As it must have done, we slowly realise, for millennia. Indigenous paintings are splayed across the walls, hundreds of them, overlapping, entwined, nesting together in white, yellow and red. Some have faded to ghostly afterimages, others seemingly as sharply defined as the day they were made. The paintings show thin figures dancing,

**The further north we go the more the landscape increases in grandeur – everything seems to be getting bigger, bolder and brighter.**





*Time for a cuppa. The set-up at our first campsite*

echidnas, barramundi, turtles, snakes, goanna and kangaroos – lots of kangaroos. The site is a reminder that Kakadu National Park contains the greatest collection of rock art in the world: around 5,000 art sites have been recorded and another 10,000 are estimated to be in the area. Forget Canberra, Australia's real National Gallery is up here. At a sandy bend in the river we scout for a campsite. In the wet season a 40-metre wide torrent of water must tumble down the

flight of massive stone steps just to our north before spreading out over this wide, sandy basin. The basin is rimmed either side by rock shelves containing more Indigenous art. We put up our tent on the soft, warm sand among a grove of thin acacias then go for a swim in a deep pool above the stone steps. We spend the afternoon lounging by the pool watching the sun play on the fissures, seams and cracks of the rugged cliffs. Raucous flycatchers and finches come in for an afternoon knock-off drink. After dinner, mosquitoes whine against our flywire tent as a full moon rises over the cliffs, casting boulders, shrubs and sand in pewter.

In the morning we change our plans. We had intended to pack up camp and explore an intriguing looking valley nearby, camping the night about eight kilometres away. But from our short look at the valley yesterday, finding water in the area seems far from certain. Instead we decide to maintain our base camp here where we have water, shade and a swimming hole, and explore the valley on day walks over the next two days. (The change of plan proves a good idea as we find no potable water in the valley.) We leave camp, daypacks bulging with water containers. After 200 metres we enter the valley – and a different world. Gone are the exposed rocks and sparse shrubs of the dry creekbed, instead we're in a flat, park-like oasis of waving green grass and large stately trees. The smell of tea tree oil rises from paperbarks. Friarbirds investigate the gaudy orange flowers of a fan-leaf greville. It's a



*Water worries prove unfounded. Author enjoying a drink at the first campsite*  
Photo: Yasmin Kelsall

magical place, the picture of abundance, as the numerous animal tracks through the thick grass attest. Now I understand the predominance of wallabies and kangaroos in the cave paintings – this must have been a hunting ground of rare richness. This section of the valley runs roughly north-west to south-east, five kilometres long and around 400 metres wide, bordered by huge walls of weathered orange sandstone. Despite the lushness of the plain, there is stone beneath us too. When I tap the ground with a walking pole a hollow reverberation comes back, an echo from the voids between the stone slabs beneath. We set off to explore the northwest of the valley, the walking as easy as strolling through a meadow. With no real plan for the day other than to follow our feet, I'm giddy at the prospect of the adventure ahead. The giddiness soon dissipates as a long thin snake slides through the grass in front of my boot. We detour to the south to take a quick look at some of the bluffs, crags and caves that line the rim of the valley. A rock platform forms a natural promenade leading into a



labyrinth of stone. Our 'quick look' turns into hours of wandering the byways of this stone city, exploring narrow alleys and grand plazas, edging between boulders the size of apartment buildings, discovering sun-filled amphitheatres, awe-inspiring temples and impressive battlements. Every now and then, in the most unlikely of places, we find signs of human occupation, a stencil of a hand, some stone chips, evidence of fires.

We trudge back to camp, happy, hot and sweaty. After a swim and an early dinner, we sit in silence and watch the sun go down. As darkness falls, the sky turns an intense cobalt blue, silhouetting the top of the cliffs like crenellation on a castle.

The next morning, we head back to the plain and explore the southeast of the valley. A sandy creekbed makes for easy walking and reduces the likelihood of unexpected encounters with snakes. In this part of the valley the cliffs are near vertical, 70 metres high and laid down in thin lamina, striated like some grand piece of art.

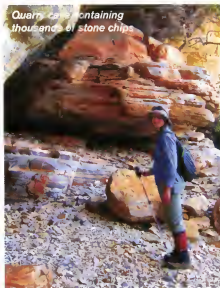
Investigating a cavern at the base of a cliff, we don't find any rock art but instead discover a quarry. We can see where the hard, vitreous rock was mined from the back of the cave and brought out into the sun to be chipped, flaked and knapped into tools. Not only the floor of the cave, but an arc 50 metres around, is covered in a thick layer of rock fragments. There must be tens of thousands of offcuts – perhaps hundreds of thousands – as well as thousands of rejected tools, including axe-heads, knives and spearheads.

It hits home. The chips are a visual representation of time; something I can really understand. This is what tens of thousands of years of occupation looks like. Yasmin picks up a greenish stone, a beautifully worked axe head, shaped from dozens of chips and gouges, but with a single flaw – a broken tip. I can just imagine the craftsman (who knows how many thousands of years ago?) patiently shaping the stone, admiring its form, then, due to one errant blow or flaw in the rock, the tip breaks off. He scowls in frustration and flings the ruined head from the mouth of the cave. And here it has lain ever since. Yasmin reverently returns the stone back to the depression it came from.

Not far away, among a clump of yellow-flowering kapok shrubs, we find a massive boulder that's been cleaved in two to create a large cave with a level floor, flat roof and a 30-metre length of wall perfect for painting. Bats flitter in the dim recesses of the cave as a tingle goes up my spine. The wall is alive with overlapping figures, animals, fish and hunters. A barramundi is painted in x-ray style, white and red pigment depicting the

fish's organs. A crocodile painted in a similar style seems life-like enough to peel off the wall and make a break for the creek. The pictures cascade over the wall, one atop the other, some faded to ghostly remnants, others bold and strong, each telling the story of this place.

A fist-sized chunk of ochre sits on a rock beside a shard of harder rock like a blade. The blade has been used to gouge away chunks of ochre and grind it to a powder.



Quarry cave containing thousands of stone chips

We can see where the pigment was used: directly overhead is a painting of a life-sized kangaroo in bold, fresh iron-red. It is difficult to judge when it was painted, but from the pile of ground powder still sitting beside the ochre, it seems relatively recently. It's a reminder that we're just two *balana* on a jaunt; that to really know this area, to understand the secrets of the stone country, its moods and meanings, would take thousands of years of accumulated knowledge – knowledge only the traditional owners have.

We leave the cave and stand blinking in the bright sunshine. We drink some water and then head towards a row of 200-metre high stone pinnacles guarding the end of the valley like sentinels.

No matter how many trips we take out here there will always be more to explore. It's a comforting thought. *W*

#### FAST FACTS

- Permits are required to hike off-track in Kakadu, see [environment.gov.au/node/21072](http://environment.gov.au/node/21072)

MAPS: Nourlangie Creek 1:50,000.

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# SLEEPING ON SUMMITS



*Making camp on mountain peaks can  
be as dangerous as it is exhilarating*  
Photo: Louise Fairfax





Accompanied by several other experts, *Louise Fairfax* describes an experience that's considered a rare honour in certain circles: to slumber in high places

If I lie there all night listening to the wind smacking and punishing my tent, or listening to thunder growl, or feeling myself lifted high on a magic carpet and don't sleep a wink, can I say I have slept on that summit? Yes. If I climb to the top of a peak at midday and in the lassitude that follows a good feed accidentally doze before I descend, can I say I have slept on that mountain? Not in the sense in which I mean it. Do I need to lug a tent? No. Robert Macfarlane in *The Wild Places* seems to make constant use of his canvas bivvy bag. I can imagine taking just a mat and a sleeping bag, trusting a good weather forecast and leaving it at that. I can also imagine keeping vigil by sitting up there all night because there's no place to lie. The important thing is to stay there overnight to share dusk and dawn and the midnight darkness with your mountain, and to be part of its life in the wild hours. Macfarlane quotes a Scottish poet who says, "You don't know

a mountain until you've slept on it." I would add, and I'm sure he'd agree, that when you have slept with it, shared its night moods, then you have an intimacy with your mountain that you won't easily forget.

What is needed in order to sleep on a summit? First, a huge spirit of adventure, as sleeping on peaks is not always safe and certainly not always sensible. It can be downright foolhardy at times... and yet the wild calls. Risk-and-safety types would go berserk with their blue forms. Second, you need a healthy serving of optimism. When the wind is howling so loudly you can hardly hear a human voice and when dark clouds are relentlessly pursuing you like vultures from above, why do you do it? Perhaps because you retain the zany and illogical hope that things might pick up in the next fourteen or so hours. And if they don't, you're the kind of person that is going to find all this fun anyway.

A third (and most important) requirement is that you truly love the wild in nature. If you are exhilarated by being next to a river in flood or a turbulent waterfall after winter rains; if hearing a wind that sounds like fifty steam trains approaching at speed fills you with wonder rather than fear, then you've possibly got what it takes. For 'wild' shares roots with words that mean chaotic, uncontrolled, untameable and frenzied. The ancient Greeks saw forms of this wildness (such as writing poetry, being in love or being mad) as a gift from the gods, and yet they also feared it. Out there, you will experience nature that is wild, that will never succumb to human desires or all our fancy mechanisms to harness its mighty forces. If you have all of the above, then the final requirement if you are going to pitch tent is that your tent is a very sturdy one. Unsuitable tents blow away or rip to shreds. A friend recently told me about his honeymoon, when their

tent blew away with the happy couple inside. They escaped and spent the night standing in a toilet (so they weren't even on a mountain). Very romantic. I have seen friends chasing their tent across a slope as it ran away. Winds can be violent and merciless on top. They may be coming to you straight from South America with nothing to curb the fury along the way.

#### MOUNT OSSA

Definitely my favourite Australian mountain to sleep on is Mount Ossa, Tasmania's highest mountain, visited by gangs of walkers over the summer as part of their pilgrimage along the Overland Trail. Luckily, however busy and popular a mountain is by day, you can be pretty confident about having it to yourself at night. Ossa is my favourite, however, not because of its fame, height or popularity, but because of the wonder of its view if you see it under the right conditions. For me, it was fourth time lucky in this regard. Sometimes you need to be persistent.

We were nudged into doing this by Elin, a young orienteering friend from Sweden whose dream it was to climb Ossa. I told her I'd take her to the top if she agreed to sleep up there. She was very excited.

On climb day, we drove in from Launceston and had a bit of trouble as the Arm River track road was closed. We found our way there eventually having lost 30 minutes I wasn't sure we could spare, then walked along that path until it intersected with the Overland Track at Pelion Hut and followed the OT up to Pelion Gap. That's where the real fun began – not that we didn't enjoy the other walking, but this was what we'd come to see. We had kept up a fairly purposeful pace until this point. Now it was time for



Sunrise on Mt Ossa, Tasmania  
Photo: Louise Fairfax

paparazzi mode. My husband doggedly pursued the end-point while Elin and I did our own thing with photography. I was as excited by the shadows and highlights on the surrounding rocks and mountains as I was by the way the aurated rays of the now descending sun illuminated the flowers on scoparia bushes. They literally shone in a kaleidoscope of rich colour.

It was mesmerising, I clicked and clicked again, making negligible progress over this

section. I wasn't worried. Summer days are long, and I know I used to run to the top of Ossa in 36 minutes, so presumably walking would only take about double that plus photo time. I was in no hurry. It was amazing the difference that carrying a pack up those rocks made. When you run, you just kind of hop from one block to the next, acting on animal instinct, as alert as any wild creature on the move. When your pack weighs nearly a third of your bodyweight, you lose that momentum; play toys for hopping over become obstacles to be climbed, and the possibility of toppling backwards becomes a reality. Despite our different agendas as we climbed, we all reassembled for the final short stint to the top so that we could

#### TIM MACARTNEY-SNAPE'S SPONTANEOUS OUTDOOR SLEEPOVERS

One mid-winter evening as a full moon began to cast its brilliance over the snowy mountains my friends and I finished dinner in front of a crackling fire in Mawsons hut and went outside to survey the silent pearlescent scene. To the north Jagungal beckoned, irresistible. A snap decision and we were loading our packs, the snow was dry but firm and in two hours we were zig-zagging our way up the final face to the summit. Snuggled in my bag I fell asleep gazing out across the 'roof' of Australia – Gungartan, Dicky Coopers Bogong, the Rolling Grounds, Tate and the whale-backs of the main range and clear in the distance Bogong and the High Plains described a snow-white arc mirrored in the sparkling arc of the

milky way wheeling above.

Two years later, across the Tasman, at Plateau Hut, a full-ish moon sparked another spontaneous decision. After successfully crossing the grand plateau in soft, pre-freeze conditions, Lincoln Hall and I climbed Mount Cook's most elegant line, its east ridge, under moonlight and bivouacked in the crevasse at the top, just under middle peak. In the night I woke to see the moon setting over a silvery Tasman Sea, then later the sun rising out of the pacific (just over the horizon) to cast a briefly lava like glow on the high summits. It's all about the light.

Tim is a mountaineer and author who has regularly contributed to Wild since its inception.



View from the Acropolis - Lake Elysa, Mt Eros and Mt Geryon  
Photo: Mike Edmonson



arrive together at the view. We wanted to share that moment as one.

I crested the last rocky obscurers of my vista to emerge on the top plateau, and was shocked to a complete halt by the beauty that met me. There were no words for this. I was overcome with emotion at seeing a scene so infinitely beautiful. Overwhelmed with its majesty, I actually cried, quiet tears rolling slowly down my face. Elin, too, was overawed with the wonder of the scene and the pleasure of fulfilling her dream. "I'm not going to sleep tonight," she announced. "This is far too beautiful to waste." We would pitch the two tents, just in case we needed them, but would all opt to just sit outside and gaze at sublimity for as long as we could.

We pitched beside some lingering snow (it was December) and a small body of water, and set out with cameras to visit, and play with, the official summit, which was about two minutes away. Being somewhat small, that was my biggest grunt effort of the day. The final metre is the most challenging. We changed position a few times in what remained of the day, cooking in one spot, eating in another, and then choosing a third to watch the very last of the day as the sky did a movie show of indigo, chartreuse, crimson, violet and blue before morphing into more pastel shades.

At 4.30am, we chose a completely different angle to observe sunrise. A shining moon that was in the process of setting – a single torchlight set against rocks that were assuming a reddish hue as light increased – obliged us, as if we didn't have enough beauty to gaze on with white cotton-ball clouds in the valley below with navy blue mountains poking above.

We were packed and away long before any others got near the mountain – we didn't meet our first other walkers until Pelion Gap, where we dumped our packs to go up Pelion East. This next day was uncharacteristically hot, so we chose to have lunch right down the bottom, near Pelion Hut, where there was protection from leeches for Elin, who didn't like being eaten while she lounged around relaxing.

We had allowed for another night, just in case, and had no need to be back home, thus we didn't go the whole way out that day. Instead, we chose another site with a vista – the highpoint of the Arm River track, with views out over several beloved mountains and a little tarn for water. It was a pleasant way to round off a perfect trip.

#### MOUNT RUFUS

For my second mountain, I've chosen, for contrast, one that is possibly more a survival epic than a tale of scenic glory. This mountain was slept on six months after our Ossa experience, so it is a tale of winter: of

ice and short days. This is nature at its wild extremity.

As I climbed Mount Rufus after a prolonged lunch, I was not committed to sleeping on top, even though I was carrying all one needed to do so. That was a decision for later. Meanwhile, I gained height, enjoying the views to Mount King William that I'd climbed that morning, with Frenchman's Cap declaring itself nearby in astonishing detail in the crisp air.

At around 4pm, I was approaching the summit cairn, now nice and close, when the mountain snap froze as I took the next step. One minute the land was normal; the next, everything was covered in a sheet of slippery black ice. I skated all over the place, clutching at anything to save myself. It didn't take too much brainpower to realise that I was suddenly in a dangerous situation and that I needed to retreat. To my horror, everything below me had frozen as well. I looked back down: below the Gingerbread hut there was a flat bowl. I could pitch there. Total retreat, although it was always in my mind as a possibility, was out of the question. Given the speed of the icing process, I needed to be as quick as possible, but to temper that with care: one slip that broke something and I would possibly die. The pineapple grass I'd hoped to sleep on (it's great in the right conditions) was a mass of silver swords, all pointing resolutely skywards: they'd shred my tent floor. I settled for stunted bauera bushes that would bounce back on the morrow, and got the tent up speedily. Sometimes I have trouble forcing the pole into the end hole, and sometimes I have to fight the fabric that sticks to itself, so it was with a relieved sigh that I completed the job.

I was shocked to note how dark it was already, and decided cooking and eating were the next priority. Interior design could be done after dark. I didn't want to create water vapour in the tent, so I cooked outside. I have been told, by a very experienced walker whose advice I sought post-event, that I



## KERRI-ANN SMITH ENCOUNTERS WILD WEATHER ON MOUNT GILES, WEST MACDONNELLS

Camping on top of Mount Giles was meant to be our Central Australian highlight: a full moon rising in clear skies over the Chewings Range; the cliff lines, peaks and ranges ruddy in the glowing sunset over Mount Sonder. But uncharacteristic red tinted cirrocumulus cloud greeted the morning. Lines of fluffy cotton balls stretched high across the sky, thickening as the day progressed and merging into a solid grey mass as we ascended and traversed the rugged skyline.

The cold wind strengthened, and clouds closed in. We reached the top on nightfall and erected our shelters on small platforms chiselled from the summit rocks. There was no sun to set, no moon to rise. Individually hunkering down against the wind, dinner was a dark and solitary affair. Tents flapped all night and the rain set in about 4am. I awakened to voices in the fog of

dawn. Visibility was limited to several metres. The map indicated several ridges snaking their way to the pound below, following similar bearings. But there was only one that didn't end in impassable cliffs. Careful navigation was paramount. We peered down into the nothingness, trying to discern something tangible to reinforce the direction we'd selected.

Wet rock glistened underfoot as we picked our way down the unrelenting decline. At times, foliage and cliff lines loomed out of the cloud to our right and left, tempting us to doubt our route selection. Eventually, we dropped below the damp fingers of mist, and the base of the pound swelled up beneath us. Not quite the Central Australian highlight we were expecting.

*Kerri-Ann is a regular bushwalker and a good friend of Wild contributor Meg McKone.*

## KLAUS HUENEKE'S RUDE AWAKENING

I once had a dramatic experience on Mount Curruthers, where a sudden warm wind evaporated the one-foot thick snow and ice walls around our tents in a matter of hours.

We were left flapping and rattling; exhausted in the fierce wind. At first light while others were still asleep in a nearby snow cave, we were packed up and ready to depart.

The lesson here is to avoid mountaintops and seek more sheltered places to make camp when you can't predict the weather (who can, really?). Also, don't rely on snow walls for shelter in the high country – the best shelter will always be a snow cave or igloo in these conditions.

*Klaus is an imminent photographer, author and admirer of all the Australian bush has to offer.*

should have got into my bag at this point, and cooked while leaning out of it. That would have helped prevent my core temperature dropping any lower. But I didn't, and as I drank my soup while waiting the obligatory ten minutes for 'dehy' to turn into 'rehy', I was startled to see ice crystals advancing up my boots and gaiters like an army of white ants on the march, forming elongated splinters of ice as I watched. Possibly a great show if it didn't spell danger for me.

Now I could prepare everything for the

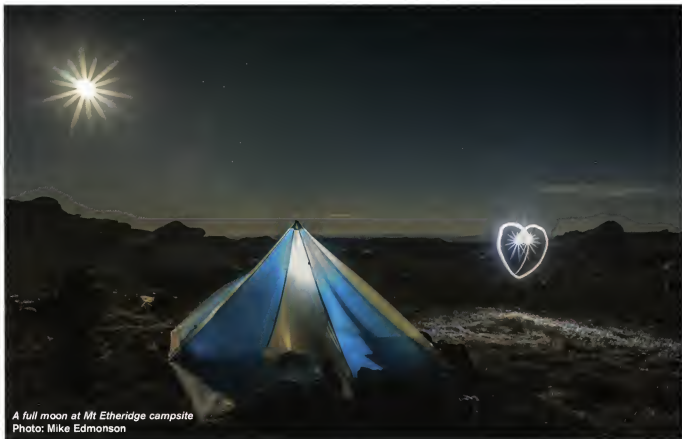
night. First, all my gear came into the tent to try to prevent ice-up. I had a carpet underlay and thick mattress underneath my winter bag. Tucked under it at the base were my boots so they wouldn't freeze up overnight. Gaiters too. Under my shoulder was a bottle of water for when I needed running liquid. In the vestibule, in case it tipped, but as close to my body as I dared, was another mug of water. My pack was under the top half of my body. To bed, I wore two pairs of thick wollen socks, possum gloves, a lined hood, thermal longs, lined overpants, two

icebreakers, a fleece, an O-top and bottom, and a thick Arcteryx jacket. Over my bag, I spread two Goretex jackets, with a spare down jacket draped over the middle. Unfortunately, I was not warm enough. Ice crystals already hung from my 'ceiling', moving down on me. I was 'sleeping' in a fridge. Help! It was now 6pm, and I began my exercise regime designed to keep my metabolism high enough to sustain life. I only did exercises that did not draw air into my bag. I did bicycles, worms, crunches, sit-ups and a series of nameless exercises taught to me one year in preparation for a World Championship, where we had to, in series, contract and relax every muscle group of the body. Our coach's emphasis had been on relaxation, but I adapted the procedure to making sure every muscle group worked. Repeat *ad infinitum*.

A watched watch never progresses. I refrained from peeping until 10pm. I was pleased. Five down, nine to go. Over a third complete. At midnight, it was better – seven each way. Half way. Yippee! At 1am, I grew anxious. The exercises weren't working in that I was getting colder, and with dismay I realised that the coldest hour of any night is one hour before dawn. That was five hours away. Could I keep this up? I wasn't fatigued yet, but could imagine being so – a bad sign. My hood had iced to the roof of the tent. I snapped the crystals to free it. I tested my boots: frozen solid despite the protection of my bag! How was my mug of water, just 20cms away? A solid block of ice. Ominous,



Campsite at Mt Acropolis  
Photo: Mike Edmonson



A full moon at Mt Etheridge campsite  
Photo: Mike Edmonson

although I comforted myself that in the change of state from water to ice, it would have released a tiny jot of heat for me. Hmm. Perhaps I could try to beat up my metabolic rate with more food. Not feeling one scrap hungry, I indulged in a feast of chocolate, nuts and mango slices, before returning to my exercise programme.

Somewhere in there I did the unthinkable and dozed off. At 7.15am, I awoke with a start, and with horror that I'd relaxed my guard. I shoved my feet into my concrete boots and went out to inspect the dawn and rejoice in unexpected life. This was not a morning for emotional lingering with my newly intimate friend Rufus. I ate, packed up and descended, shocked by how much ice there was even as I dropped hundreds of metres. The car sat, a red island in a glistening white sea. I wondered if a new adventure was about to begin. Phew. Not this time.

Nature is wild, and wild is not always friendly or tame. There is only a small sense in which I was "caught out" that night. I was there knowing fully what could happen – prepared for it – and I had chosen to be there. Like Macfarlane, I enjoy experiences of wildness. He says he climbs trees to rebel against the city's claims on him, and I guess that is part of it too. A night like I had makes you feel intensely alive, and very much in touch with nature.

As I drove away, I felt positively brimming with the joy and beauty of life. **W**

#### MIKE EDMONSON PROVIDES USEFUL ADVICE FOR THE UNINITIATED

Sleeping on peaks is not recommended for the inexperienced walker. Explore the area first on day trips to scout out campsites and photo opportunities. A few tips to make your summit a safer one: Check the weather outlook for favourable weather first. If the weather looks too wet, windy or cloudy, choose a lower elevation valley walk instead. Weather in high places can be unpredictable and sometimes fatal. Have an alternative lower campsite in a protected place in case the weather turns or it becomes physically too challenging. Even if you just peak for sunset or sunrise you'll have a safer place to camp. Preparing a set compass bearing the afternoon before can help you evacuate more quickly. In January 2013, I climbed from Pine Valley to camp on top of the Acropolis. Climbing from Pine Valley hut to camp with a tent, sleeping mats, sleeping bags, three litres of water per person and gear for all weather (and all of my camera gear of course!) on a hot day was quite challenging. However, the amazing sunset and sunrise was absolutely worth the climb!

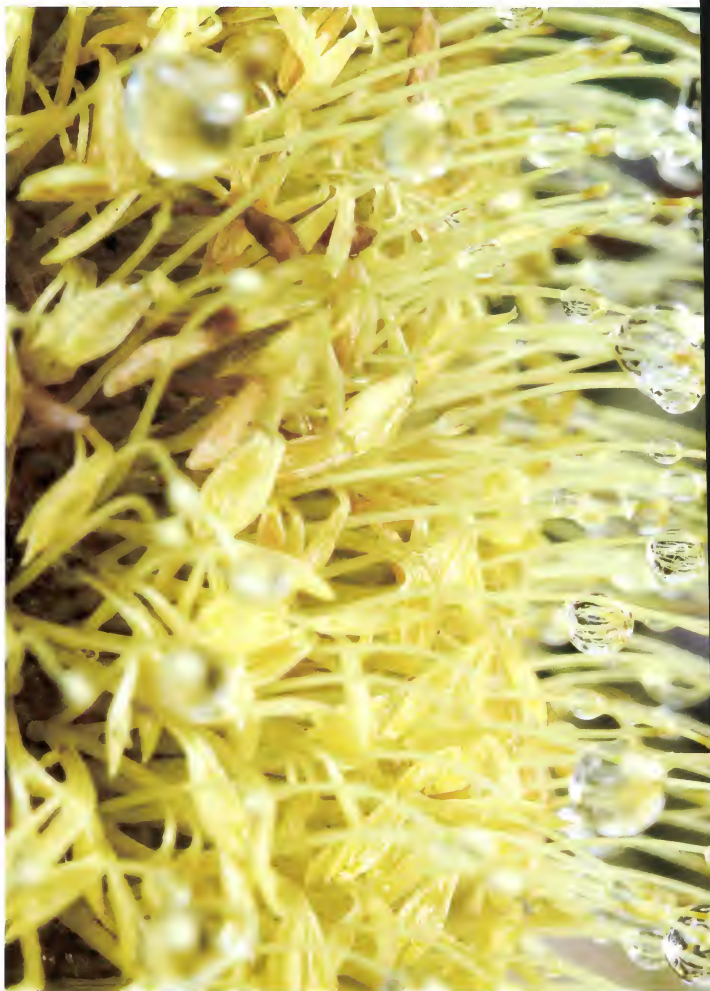
Be prepared to evacuate. I've had to evacuate summit camps after photographing great sunsets a few times. When the wind picked up it was

time to evacuate. I left in the dark with just a head torch so I could find a safe place to get a few hours' sleep. I've evacuated with my skis and gear from South Rams Head and Tim's Lookout at night, and Mount Etheridge at dawn in summer. During winter, conditions can be even more treacherous with steep icy slopes and colder white-out conditions to contend with. Take extra food and water. Often there's no water on the summit so be sure to carry enough. Remember: one litre weighs one kilogram. You may need this if you have to stay put until the weather clears.

The closest peak to sleep on near Mount Kosciuszko (which you're not allowed to camp on) is Mount Etheridge. From here, you can easily walk up to Kosi for sunset or sunrise and see the amazing Bogong moths at dusk in summer.

**NB:** In Kosciusko National Park, camping in the catchments of glacial lakes is not allowed and neither is camping within 100 metres of roads, day walk areas and resort boundaries. As both photographer and intrepid bushwalking guide, Mike has contributed to *Wild in the past* and has also provided the cover image for this issue.





# *La vie en vert*

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Amateur photographer *Andrew Quick* delves into the beautiful and oft-overlooked flora that Australia's forests have to offer

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Previous page: *Silver banksia* (*Banksia marginata*) after rain, Ocean Grove Nature Reserve

Clockwise from left: Surprise River, Frankland-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park; Glasswort (*Sarcocornia* sp.), Edwards Point Flora and Fauna Reserve; Bullant climbing down grasstree (*Xanthorrhoea australis*) flower spike

Traveller Andrew Quick enjoys bushwalking in Australia's southern forests and observing the beautiful, quiet moments that nature provides in abundance. His photography has also featured in a guide to indigenous plant species of the Barwon River in Geelong.







# Exposure

Fellow adventure photographer *Nick Fletcher* comes to grips with the force behind Krystle Wright's boundless drive and passion

Being an adventure photographer is about going to the ends of the earth, whether it's high in the sky or deep in the ocean, all with the aim of capturing people doing extraordinary things - often in some of the most remote places on Earth. It is through this shared passion that I met Krystle Wright. For Krystle, photography has taken her from working at a local paper on the Sunshine Coast to becoming a sought-after commercial photographer and filmmaker. More recently, Canon Australia recognised Krystle's achievements by anointing her as a 'Canon Master'. Having now spoken with Krystle on multiple occasions, I feel I've been granted a new perspective on what it takes to be a great photographer. And it's certainly not a simple case of point and shoot.

"I have no idea how long I blacked out for. From the moment of impact to when I remember waking up, I knew that a couple minutes had potentially passed." Krystle recounts the terrifying moment that nearly put an end to her career - and life - while working in Pakistan in 2011. "The lead up happened so fast, but I remember it all up until the point when I collided with the rocks." At the age of 24, Krystle had been commissioned to photograph a paragliding record attempt in the Karakorum Range in North Pakistan. While making to take off from a steep slope, Krystle got caught in a cross-wind and was smashed into the ravine below as a result. She awoke some minutes later to find that not only were all her cameras broken, but that she had also sustained injuries to her entire body.

"All I could do was sit and be patient as a stretcher was sent up from the nearby village," she recalls. "I had to become good at being patient as it took a total of 12 hours from the time of the accident to the time I reached the military hospital in Skardu."

While the accident in remote Pakistan tested Krystle's mettle, her journey into the world of photography wasn't quite as intrepid. Her first experience was gained during

Krystle and Nick meet to discuss life on the precipice at Sydney Harbour.  
Photo: Nick Fletcher



her time at university, where Krystle began working for a local daily newspaper. The job provided Krystle with a taste of what it was like to be a working photographer.

"The Sunshine Coast Daily was a great start to my career," she says. "It introduced me to how the system works and provided valuable practical experience, so I got to the point where I was able to begin working some shifts with the *Sunday Mail* and the *Courier Mail*. I owe the *Sunshine Coast Daily* for giving me my start in the industry and teaching me the ropes."

From that point, Krystle found work as a casual photographer for the *Sunday Telegraph* and as a stringer for *Agence France-Presse*, but her career working for newspapers would come to a halt because of her accident in Pakistan. Not only did the time spent convalescing cause her to reevaluate her path, it also yielded a chance phone call that would allow her future to take on a new shape.

"Out of the blue, I received a phone call asking if I would like to work in Antarctica as a guide and photography instructor," she says. "I took the gamble and packed up all my belongings, put them into a shipping container on my grandparents property and took off."

Although Krystle is the first to admit that it had been a risky decision, she also felt confident in having spent the previous four years shooting adventure sports. "I'd had heaps of time to build up a wide network of experts that could help me, so I wasn't diving in the deep end."

From that moment on, Krystle's life has been a non-stop whirlwind of diving in the icy waters of the Arctic, slacklining high in the Sierra Nevada and paddling down rivers in Mongolia (not to mention running workshops and fulfilling sponsor commitments at the same time). Krystle's nomadic lifestyle has taken her around the world to capture places both beautiful and remote. The nomadic lifestyle, however, has unique challenges; with nowhere to call home and all her worldly belongings stored in an old shipping container, it takes titanic drive and passion to be able to churn through trip after trip, with sometimes only a few days of downtime in between.

"It's hard work being a freelancer, but I don't see it as work," she says. "It's certainly consumes a lot of my time, but that's because I love it. The challenges are difficult - this is a lifestyle and not your typical job, so it isn't going to suit everyone. You have to ask yourself, can I live without the security of a salary? Am I willing to invest my own time and finances into projects?" Krystle, ever a realist, also points out the challenges inherent in pursuing any photography career in the modern age. "The digital era has

levelled the playing field, which means you have to go the extra mile if you want to stand out above the rest."

Understanding and embracing the need for competitive drive also means finding time to stop and relax from time to time. However, even rest days rarely entail much actual rest for Krystle; instead they're a chance to indulge in passions and pursuits without having a camera in hand. And that is exactly the attitude that she believes has led to her growing public profile, Krystle cites (amongst others) the likes of Jimmy Chin, Tim Kemple and Aaron Huey as her inspiration, all of whom have been hugely successful photographers while also producing numerous editorial and commercial projects.

With Krystle recently named a Canon Master, the hard work is beginning to pay off. "It is an incredible privilege!" she says. "Not only to be included in such a wonderful lineup of photographers, but also as an opportunity to explore through many mediums, whether it's giving back by presenting workshops or seminars, or creating new and exciting projects to share with the community. I really feel incredibly lucky to be in such a position, but I am also honored to be recognised for my work."

Placing highly in the prestigious Red Bull

results of an error are so much more severe. "Unfortunately, a few years back on an expedition to Baffin Island, my good friend Jim took a fatal BASE jump where I had photographed the exit, but did not know the outcome until I had reached my friends at the base of the mountain. You know this sort of thing can happen, but you are never prepared emotionally. It knocks you to the ground."

Adventure sports come with their own risks and challenges, and Krystle exhibits the same stoic nature as anyone with a stomach for them, saying: "The best outcome is to come home safe, in one piece and 100 per cent healthy. I can handle injuries, as it comes as part of the job, but you never think beforehand, 'Okay, I am willing to break a leg to get this shot'. I don't think anyone would logically think like that; instead you think, 'Yes, I am willing to get my hands dirty and work really hard.'"

Recently, Krystle has been getting more heavily involved in the moving image medium, with her film, *Nobody's River* documenting a two month expedition from Mongolia to Far East Russia on the Amur River - all in a bid to document the changes taking place in the region, from the pristine headwaters in Mongolia to the polluted waters through Russia and into China. As

**"When I work with athletes, I am a documentary photographer," Krystle explains. "Very rarely will I give direction and ask them to do something specific, but it's important to be very clear."**

'Illume' photo competition as well as being included as an F-Stop Pro staff member, helps to ensure Krystle is mostly placed right where the action is. Unfortunately, being an adventure sports photographer does pose additional problems. The action is often dangerous and athletes frequently put themselves at risk in order to provide the perfect shot.

"When I work with athletes, I am a documentary photographer," Krystle explains. "Very rarely will I give direction and ask them to do something specific, but it's important to be very clear. If conditions aren't right, I don't care how far I've come or how much money or time has been spent, it's not worth being severely hurt or worse. I know in my own experience as a photographer, climbers will sometimes repeat climbs where the consequences of a fall will almost certainly result in a trip to hospital, and knowing that people are doing this to further your art poses clear ethical questions. When photographing sports such as BASE jumping, that line is definitely sharper, as the

with anyone with a love for the outdoors, Krystle is strongly committed to the environment and showcasing the effect that humans can have on our delicate ecosystems. "Our ignorance and arrogance is the biggest risk our planet faces," she explains. "Education is key, but so many people become addicted to modern luxuries and being connected online, it worries me that more and more are losing their connection to or understanding of nature. If a problem doesn't directly affect someone firsthand, or it isn't happening in their own backyard, the prevailing attitude is to be ignorant and blasé, like it doesn't matter. I wish more people would learn how to disconnect and escape for a few days and remember how important it is to preserve our wildernesses."

*Nobody's River* is a 29-minute film featured in the likes of the 5Point Film Festival, European Outdoor Film Tour and Banff Mountain Film Festival. [W](#)



[wrightfoto.com.au](http://wrightfoto.com.au)  
[nickfletcherphotography.com](http://nickfletcherphotography.com)

Madlen Wayermann on the abseil  
at the start of Arethusa Canyon  
Photo: Dave Noble



# NOT EXACTLY

## a walking trip

*Col Gibson examines the early history of canyoning in the Blue Mountains*

**'To the most experienced Alpinist the Blue Mountains contain many "impossible" climbs, but gradually the most foreboding gorges, the precipitous rock faces, the apparently inaccessible crags are being mastered by sheer doggedness.' – Eric Lowe, *The Sydney Mail*, September 1931**

Mountaineers). The focus of the BMCC was in getting to the top, not the bottom, getting down from a summit was more likely to involve reverse climbing rather than any kind of abseiling. The BMCC had been active only for about a year when, in August 1930, it turned its attention to Arethusa Falls. Foremost among the group was Eric Lowe who, in about 1906, had aided his father in the rescue of a man found injured at the base of the falls. 'My father knew all about the falls' wrote Lowe, "Years ago," he told us, "two convicts had attempted to climb out of the gorge. One of them had actually reached the top of the falls, but slipping on the wet moss, had been washed over the edge and smashed on the rocks below." He pointed to two clumps of gnarled and twisted shrubs clinging to

For bushwalkers in the first half of the twentieth century the sandstone slot canyons of the Blue Mountains were places to keep out of. If a bushwalker strayed upon a canyon he invariably looked for the quickest way out. Arethusa Canyon changed this, for it was there that bushwalking clubs first put canyons on the agenda, which places it at the very

genesis of canyoning in Australia. The conquest of the canyon was hard won. It is worth noting that the first attempts were aimed from below, where the first (or last) obstacle, Arethusa Falls, presents. As such, these were climbing exercises, the earliest of which were undertaken by the pioneer Blue Mountains Climbing Club (also known as The Blue

the side of the cliff, the upper group actually in the water of the fall, and both of them continually drenched with spray. "That," he said, "is supposed to be their way up." The memory of that day has stayed with me, and when, after many years I came to live on the Mountains, I could never feel contented until the falls had been mastered.<sup>11</sup>

In preparation for the attempt, Lowe had established a depot with camping gear in a cave in a branch of Katoomba Creek he called Lerida Gorge, to serve as a depot for future explorations in the area. Eric Lowe's Lerida Gorge (known to Sydney Bush Walkers in the 1940s as Rookery Nook Canyon) today is better known as Alpheus Canyon. The initial attempt to scale the falls was undertaken by Lowe, Osmar White and two others unnamed, making their approach from Katoomba via the tourist track through the Grand Canyon. The ascent of the falls tested their skills, Lowe recorded, 'No obvious way presented itself, and we had to try many cracks and ledges before we finally came to a narrow ledge that led us to within roping distance of the lowest group of shrubs. We were now about 150 feet up the cliffs and more than half way to the top of the Falls. We were wet with spray. On the narrow ledge we could feel the vibration of the thudding water, and the clamour of the Falls made it impossible for us to hear each other, even though we shouted.'

Several hours were spent investigating possible ways out of the gorge, but to no avail, as White later recollected, 'It was then too late to tackle the cliffs above the Falls and we turned back, hoping to reach a reasonable camp site before nightfall. After two or three hours stumbling around in the pitch dark and heavy rain, trying to keep as close to the foot of the main cliffs as possible, we sat down where we were and went to sleep. It was sobering to wake in the morning and discover that we had bumbled our way up a fast rising ledge and had slept within a metre or so of a sixty metre drop.'<sup>12</sup> Lowe and White returned to the scene in February 1931, with Dr Eric Dark and Jim Starkey, this time having to spend an uncomfortable night in the rain at the foot of the cliffs above the Grand Canyon. Next morning, after drying out, they proceeded to Arethusa Falls where an improvised camp was eventually made on a ledge above the falls. White remembered it, 'a forbidding place indeed...cold, windy and full of echoes. My private anxiety was that the creek would flash-flood during the night and wash all to kingdom come.'

During the night White sprained his ankle as a result of losing his balance while taking a pee, such are the hazards of a canyoning pioneer.

Thoughts the party may have entertained of penetrating further into the cold, dim depths of the canyon ended hereabouts, for in the morning the party set about climbing out of the gorge, Starkey volunteering to gain a ledge by way of a swim. Lowe recounted, 'A blacker, more sinister bath I have never seen.' He had fifty yards of deep water to cross against a strong current, and a steep, slippery cataract to ascend at the other end. Having crossed the pool he had little difficulty in

necessity of having to haul the injured White up some of the more difficult sections. Once in Alpheus, Lowe and White were on familiar ground, having made a descent to Vida Falls only a few weeks before, on occasion of which they made use of a dead sapling that some earlier adventurer had leaned against a rock wall to facilitate access. This sapling puzzled them much, Lowe commenting, 'I am curious about that sapling. It has two steps cut in it, apparently with an axe many years ago. It is obvious that someone before us had been down to the top of Vida Falls.' The sapling enabled a member of Lowe's party, probably Dark, to surmount the cliff and lower a rope for the others.

On reaching Lowe's Rookery Nook depot cave, the party rested before starting on the eight mile tramp back into Katoomba, congratulating themselves on being the first to have climbed out of the gorge from the base of Arethusa Falls. Arethusa Canyon itself, however, remained largely unexplored above the falls, and while The Blue Mountaineers remained active in the area, they seem for the most part to have preferred cliff climbing to plumbing the depths of canyons.

In the 1930s, climbing methods were rudimentary. The days of harnesses, pitons and karabiners lay years in the future, whilst rope, when it was used, was usually carried or hauled to the top of the pitch by the lead climber who lowered it down to facilitate ascent by the rest of the party. A shoulder belay would often suffice and the preferred 'Manila hemp' or heavy sash cord was awkward to work with, dramatically increasing in weight when wet.

There was no shortage of challenges for bushwalkers in the 1930s; in fact a new adventurousness had been developing among the organised walking clubs since the formation of the Sydney Bush Walkers in 1927. By 1937 a core group had formed in the Sydney Bush Walkers that took personal fitness and hard, off-track walking very seriously – the SBW Tigers. The Tigers in the main were not climbers, although one of them, Dot English (later Butler) was as close to a climber as the club could claim. Fellow SBW, Marie Byles, had introduced Dot to Dr. Dark, when Marie and Dot went climbing with the BMCC to the Warrambungles during Easter 1936. Dark was impressed with Dot's natural climbing talent, introducing her to more technical climbing, for Dot was, as she later recalled, 'Accustomed to rushing up and over rock faces barefoot



reaching the ledge, and so narrow is the gap above the water made by overhanging rocks, that, having climbed to the level on the opposite side, I was able to swing over to him his clothes and our best rope." Beyond this it was only by dint of some daring climbing (led by Dark) that the party managed to breach the cliffs surrounding Vida Falls to gain entry into the lower end of Alpheus Canyon. The climbing was made more arduous by the



A more recent negotiation of the main constriction of Arethusa  
Photo: Tom Begic

and unroped, jumping for likely looking holds, swinging out on scant bits of vegetation growing out of cliffs. It was a new (and somewhat painful) experience to be tied on to a retaining rope, hooked over impending belays, obliged to stop and make sure two holds are secure before relinquishing the third.<sup>13</sup>

It could well have been Dot, inspired by Dr Dark's tales, who suggested it, when on a scorching hot weekend in November 1937 the Tigers headed for Arethusa Falls; the party of eight consisting of Dot, Gordon Smith, Jack Debert, Alex Colley, Hilma Galliot, Edna Garrad, Clare Kinsella and Doris Christian.

As with the early BMCC attempts the plan was to climb the canyon from below, which might also suggest the doctor's influence.

On Sunday, November 13, with packs up and a mere fifty feet of rope, the party scrambled through the tangled river vegetation following Govetts Creek upstream from the camp at Syncarpia. The Tigers arrived at the tumbling spray of Arethusa Falls along a wallaby track traversing a crumbly ledge. They then set about scaling the surrounding wall in the manner the convicts had, as Dot recounted, by utilising, 'two small stunted bushes, distorted in their growth by the impact of many floods and the fact that they relied for sustenance on a mere handful or so of soil strewn in several small niches and crevices in the cliff face.'<sup>14</sup> Dot remembered the canyon, 'enveloped in a Stygian gloom...no sunlight ever touched the dark rocks; only a dim light filtered down from the closed-in top of the hundred foot high walls.'<sup>15</sup>

The roar of the water was deafening and they soon realised their best option was to keep to the watercourse itself, swimming, scrambling and wading through the chasm as best they could.

A small waterfall blocked their way, at the base of which they were treading water; they managed to press themselves up through, 'a neat circular depression like a plug hole with the plug removed.' The walls of the canyon, almost touching overhead, now shut them in; they slid and clambered onwards, 'squeezing and creeping under rock ledges, snaking along in a fine powdering of rock sand that had lain undisturbed for centuries.'

Wrapping their packs in groundsheets to float them through the deeper pools, Dot noted, 'We might have gone ten miles or we might have gone less than half a mile – all sense of time and distance was forgotten in the din of many waters and the feeling of being the only people left



Abseiling down the final waterfall in the Canyon, 1975  
Photo: Dave Noble

in the world, and above all the conviction that we must go on – go on, finding a way to surmount all obstacles that might bar our progress.'

By mid afternoon they were chilled to the marrow, finally coming upon, 'a forty foot sheer wall of rock so smoothly polished that even a lizard would not find a foothold there, and over which a waterfall, passing through a cleft in the rock, hurled itself into a deep pool below.' They could precede no further, deciding to call it a glorious failure and retreat.

Gordon, Dot and Bert Whillier spent the ensuing summer mountaineering in New Zealand, returning with extra confidence in their climbing abilities. Keen for another tilt at the canyon dragon the three, along with Jack Debert, would travel light, 'discarding tents and sleeping bags in favour of the *Sydney Morning Herald*', aiming at Arethusa in March 1938. Gordon and Jack seem to have hit upon a new strategy, while Dot's group would come up the gorge on Saturday, they would arrive in Katoomba on the Friday night and recce below Minnehaha Falls as far as possible and, in any event, meet with Dot and Bert at their camp at Syncarpia, below Arethusa Falls, on the Saturday night.

At Syncarpia on the Saturday night, Dot and Bert met with a party of a dozen or so Rover Rambler scouts and the parties deciding to combine for the attempt on the falls. Not surprisingly, Jack and Gordon failed to show during the night,



so in the morning Dot and Bert with the unwieldy group of scouts successfully took on the falls. Pressing into the canyon they soon realized it would be folly to go further, rain being a factor, and it turned out that some of the Rovers could not swim!

They decided to climb out by the eastern wall of the gorge, in the manner of The Blue Mountaineers, up a series of ledges, hauling packs after, one of which tumbled from a great height back into the dark water of the canyon, having to be retrieved with difficulty. It was a slow exercise, facilitated by Dot's spider-monkey climbing tactics and a conveniently placed tree growing out at an angle from the side of the near vertical gorge. From high up the canyon side someone thought they heard shouts from below.

Turning back along a ledge they met with another canyon (the lower end of Alpheus) and in light rain swam and clambered their way, wet and bedraggled, to the summit of the plateau. Again shouts were heard from below, could it be Gordon and Jack?

Back in Sydney, Dot learned how the recon party had gone down from Minnehaha as planned, deciding to press on downstream until they encountered the ascent party. They spent their second night (Saturday night) in Katoomba Creek and were stopped on the Sunday morning only, 'by the canyon floor dropping away into a waterfall chute some sixty feet high.' With no sign of the ascent party, they called out before retreating, later returning to the top of the waterfall to cooe again but, receiving no reply, set off for Katoomba.

With winter approaching the canyon would have to wait. Gordon and Jack's foray down Katoomba Creek had shown them that top down was the best approach, and that rope would be essential for getting them through. Soon after the trip, David Stead announced he was putting Arethusa on the walks programme for 1939; but in fact it made the programme for the week end of October 29-30 1938, with Gordon and Jack down as co-leaders.

Unfortunately no account of the trip seems to exist, so we don't know who

was with them, but the success of this trip was attributed to members of SBW's Rock Climbing Section, so that would certainly put Dot in the thick of it, with David Stead also likely. All that was recorded at the time was that the party succeeded in getting all the way down from Minnehaha Falls through to the base of Arethusa Falls and back. Not only was this the first successful descent of a canyon, but the first canyon trip to appear on a club program.

Only a brief note concerning this trip appeared in *The Sydney Bushwalker*, which, under 'Club Gossip', made mention of the use of about 300 feet of rope: 'They had to use about 300 ft. of rope, though! So that the creek - which beat them before - has been conquered; and the conquerors

are justly proud. But, from all accounts, it was not exactly a walking trip!'<sup>6</sup> Certainly Gordon and Jack knew that having plenty of rope was essential to the completion of the descent, having been thwarted for the lack of it back in March. 300 feet of rope would enable them to double lines wherever required, so it's probable they left rope in place for the return back up through the canyon. Arethusa opened a new door for bushwalkers, although it did not lead directly to any burst of canyon exploration; the technology would have to improve for that. *W*

The author would like to acknowledge the work of Andy Macqueen and the assistance of Denise Brady in preparing this article.



Rik Deveridge wading down  
Arethusa Canyon, 1975  
Photo: Dave Noble

#### Footnotes

1. Eric Lowe, 'Ascent of the Arethusa Falls', in *The Sydney Mail* 16-9-1931
2. Osmar White, cited in 'Portrait of a Climber: Part Two, The Blue Mountaineers', by 'Clio', in *The Sydney Bushwalker*, January 1990.
3. Dot Butler, cited by 'Clio' in 'Portrait of a Climber: Part Three, The Sydney Rock Climbers' in *The Sydney Bushwalker*, February 1990.
4. 'A Glorious Failure: The Unconquered Heights of Arethusa Falls', by Dot English (Butler), in *The Bush Walker (Annual)*, No. 2 1938. (Note: All Dot's quotes are taken from this, except for the passages denoted 4 & 10).
5. 'Reflections of a Climber: Part Two, The Rock Climbing Section of the Sydney Bushwalkers', by Dot Butler, in *The Sydney Bushwalker*, No. 372 December 1965.
6. Note by 'Sunlight' in *The Sydney Bushwalker*, No. 48 December 1938.

# SAND, SALT and forest

Wilsons Promontory, often smothered by visitors, reveals a more peaceful side to *Christina Armstrong*

**T**he map says this is Wilsons Promontory National Park but I swear someone has dropped me in a remote, tropical paradise.

A powder white beach of soft sand lies tucked between headlands covered in lush green forest. The calm, flat ocean is a sparkling turquoise colour and there are no crowds, no other walkers, no boats offshore and no buildings in sight. There is just my partner Caz and I, under the bright blue sky, with a soft breeze blowing through sweet-scented flowers at our feet. We are at "The Prom" to complete a leisurely 60-kilometre loop-walk of its southern reaches, linking together several tracks to ensure we see the best of the best. To be honest though, I expected cold, windswept extremes as this park is home to the Australian mainland's most southerly point. It is also Victoria's most popular national park with more than 400,000 visits each year. I certainly expected more of a crowd. But, with good planning and a bit of luck, it seems we have landed in a rare and remote wilderness idyll.

## **DAY 1 – TELEGRAPH SADDLE TO SEALERS COVE CAMPGROUND (10.2KM)**

Our walk begins at Telegraph Saddle car park where we tumble out of the free shuttle bus that runs on weekends from November to April. It saves us a 3.5-kilometre uphill road-walk from the car park at Tidal River, where we will ultimately end our multi-day adventure. The bus is convenient and full of

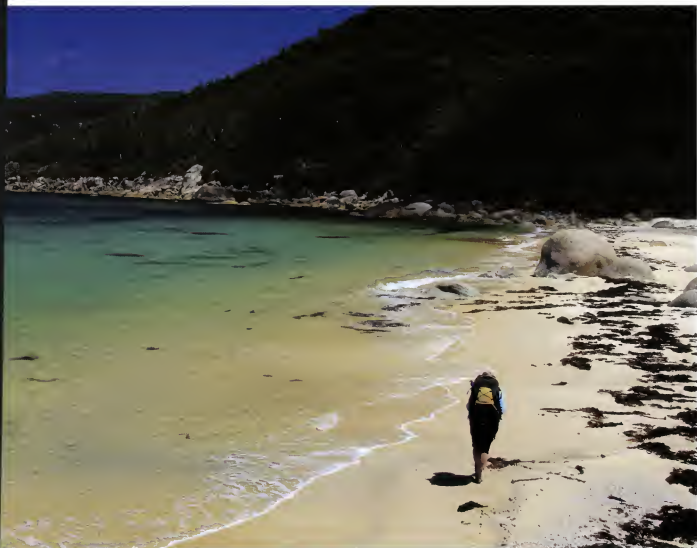
chatty European backpackers and families nursing colourful daypacks. Everybody is relaxed and cheerful because everybody is on holidays, even if just for a weekend or a day. At Telegraph Saddle, most passengers head for the 3.4-kilometre walk to the summit of Mount Oberon, which is the park's most iconic peak. It rises to 547 metres and gives stunning views across the promontory. We are keen to get started on our trek so we head east along Sealers Cove Walking Track. My large pack settles comfortably onto my hips and sweat starts creeping down my back as we walk steadily uphill towards Windy Saddle. The track feels so civilised. It is as wide as a road and newly graded. Half an hour in, we discover why. As we round a bend the forest opens up around us. A huge swathe of vegetation has been gouged away in a landslide that has shifted giant boulders and tonnes of earth. An information board nearby explains that a devastating flood event in 2011 caused widespread damage to Wilsons Promontory National Park. There are old photos of the small gully in front of us showing dramatic gaping holes and washouts where the track should be.

It has now been beautifully rebuilt and several opportunistic plant species, such as wattle and blanket leaf, are repopulating the bare patches of ground. The remaining scar, however, is spectacular evidence of the true power of nature and a vivid illustration of how weather transforms and alters our landscape.



Following the waterline at North Waterloo Bay  
Photos: Craig Fardell

Not long after the landslide is a grassy opening atop Windy Saddle. Here the trail plunges into a completely different landscape as it heads downhill towards Sealers Cove. We duck under low trees and the path narrows as it enters a dark, moist forest filled with tall ferns and mossy logs. The ground is muddy in parts with slippery rocks and roots and an increasing number of walkers coming up from the beach. Stepping aside, I let some girls in bikini tops and sandals go past and then a group of young walkers with large, festooned backpacks. One of them has tiny speakers sitting on the outside of his bag and 'doof doof' music is pumping out. He is singing happily and gives me a smile as he passes. I guess it takes all sorts to love the wilderness and it gets me thinking about the ability of the natural world to reach so many different people – the way sand and salt and the delicious fragrances of the forest infuse lungs and skin and surely creep into the minds and hearts of every visitor. Descending through the forest of tall Mountain Ash trees, I admit I feel sorry for the walkers passing us by. It is obvious they are heading home after their all-too-short weekend while Caz and I are just starting to



get into the swing of this beautiful, relaxing landscape. At the base of the hills a boardwalk weaves through the fern-thick, tannin stained Sealers Cove Swamp. By the time we have our bare feet wiggling in the cool sand of the beach the weekend walkers have all gone home and we have the place to ourselves.

Except, of course, for the corpses. Along the shoreline, hundreds of dead short-tailed shearwaters lie washed up on the sand having been forced, by a season of strong winds and storms, beyond their limit of fatigue and hunger.

At Sealers Cove, I estimate the live population to be just one and it is floating listlessly out on the bay being harried and pecked by a large Pacific gull. It is one of those David Attenborough moments - nature and the food chain at work, and me a helpless bystander.

When we cross the little creek at the southern end of Sealers Cove the stark brutality of nature quickly disappears from my mind. The forest campground is quiet and peaceful. A pair of crimson rosellas wander boldly amongst the trees and over the rocks, inspecting my belongings as I unpack. With camp set up, and only one

other small group of walkers nearby, we head out to watch the sunset from the top of granite boulders that lie like coloured glass marbles on the wrinkled sand. Soft, evening light takes the edge off the day. The air stills. Sounds settle into an easy rhythm - the faint swish of the incoming tide and the piping calls of two oystercatchers probing the littoral with their red-straw beaks.

#### DAY 2 - SEALERS COVE TO LITTLE WATERLOO BAY (13.4KM)

Early the next morning we set off south, dodging our first snake of the trip: something stripey and quick. The track winds around a dry granite headland, with spectacular views of the ocean and cove, but it all disappears when the path leads us through a forest of tall stringybarks and scribbly gums. However, we quickly catch glimpses of the next sun-drenched pocket of coastline ahead.

Refuge Cove has a large campground, mainly catering to yacht and boat visitors who have created a display of man-made ship names that have been written, carved, scratched, scrawled and constructed with all kinds of timber, driftwood, flotsam and jetsam. There

are no boats in the bay and just one bushwalker's tent tucked away amongst the paperbarks. Our private ownership of this walk is a wonderful bonus and it is at the next lookout point that the feeling of isolation really kicks in.

It is a surprisingly hot and steep walk from the cove up to Kersops Peak, one of the few high points on this walk, at 204 metres. But here we are greeted by the whole tropical paradise fantasy.

To the south lies the perfectly calm Waterloo Bay. The ocean is exquisite shades of green and blue against blinding white beaches and dark hills. On the horizon float marvelous rocky islands. A few puffy white clouds float across the sky. It is the sort of enticing view that stirs a walker's curiosity and sense of adventure; what is down there in that beautiful bay, how can I get to those wild rocky islands, and what is in the forest on those hills?

I am most tempted to get to the beach and be the first to dive into the clear water but, as soon as we reach the coast, something else stops us in our tracks. Bunches of bright pink flowers line the path, a result of a carpet of trigger plants in early spring

bloom. It is a sensory overload; the rich colour and variety of landscape at every bend.

When we do arrive at Little Waterloo Bay, we dump our packs in the campground behind the dunes, and sprint for the beach. I fumble with the laces of my boots as the tropical colours of the water lure me to the shore. Three barefoot steps into the ocean, however, and the reality of The Prom sinks in – the water is freezing. This is the Southern Ocean not the Coral Sea, and that little cooling breeze is in fact a cold wind swinging straight up from Tasmania and beyond. A swim is entirely out of the question. I stay on the shore but stoically wade the length of Little Waterloo Bay in my bare feet, feeling the cold water tugging at my legs.

#### DAY 3 – LITTLE WATERLOO BAY TO ROARING MEG (17.4KM)

Starting early on day three, we head south towards Wilsons Promontory Light Station. The soft white sand of Waterloo Bay is achingly bright. The weather seems to be getting better and better and hotter and hotter. We head off the beach following the South East Walking Track, which traverses the base of Boulder Range. I dunk my hat in the first icy stream and let cool water drip down my neck and face. Today I would have got more than ankle deep in the ocean but we have to keep moving as it is the longest leg of our loop walk and includes a side trip to the lighthouse.

It is a steady climb along the side of the range and there is a perfectly placed granite boulder, just off track near the top, giving excellent views along the coast. The rocky

hulk of Rodondo Island looms in the distance and bright red and blue container ships steam east and west through Bass Strait. Below us, low green foliage sweeps down the steep hillside and as I scan the coast, two southern right whales – a mother and calf – surface and send a puff of condensation into the air like a smoke signal. At the turnoff to the Wilsons Promontory Light Station, we leave our packs hidden in the shade, and make our way up a ridiculously steep little pinch to where two friendly lighthouse caretakers are gardening. They greet us warmly and, even though we have decided not to stay at the lighthouse, they happily show us through one of the accommodation houses. The whitewashed buildings have been beautifully maintained and feel airy and welcoming, filled with bunk beds and couches. We also wander through the small museum and peek through the telescope. The lighthouse was built in 1859 from local stone and stands 19 metres tall. Its thick walls keep the rooms cool and quiet despite the growing heat and wind outside.

Yet again, there are no other visitors around, just us. Quiet times like this, the caretakers must have the world's best job – perched out here on this remote tip of land with the wild and changing ocean beating against the granite cliffs, watching whales and birds as they tip between waves and sky and dodging busy wombats as they graze around the buildings at night.

We fill our water bottles from the taps provided and set off back to our packs. The afternoon heat is stifling but there are plenty of others who are enjoying the warm

conditions. A flash of movement beside the track stops me suddenly as a big, sleek tiger snake disappears from its sunbaking spot just centimetres beside my left boot. For the next 10 kilometres every stick and piece of bark seems alive. Another two snakes and one blue tongue lizard later and it feels like the park is crawling with wildlife.

Roaring Meg, our next campsite, is nestled beside a lush, fern draped creek with small pools of tannin stained water. It is a nice change of scene and the surrounding forest is cool and shady and protected from a growing wind up on the ridge top. It is here walkers can undertake a six-kilometre return trek to mainland Australia's most southern tip, creatively named South Point. Careful consideration needs to be given to any itinerary that includes this side-trip, as it adds substantial time and distance onto already big days. It does seem an important box to tick but we decide the elevated view from the lighthouse is more than good enough. It is time to relax, slow down and have an easy afternoon enjoying the amazing variety of wildlife and plant life. A flock of twenty gang-gang cockatoos are clambering around the treetops and squabbling over the best roosting branches. I watch them for ages; their bright red heads nodding up and down as they chat and



#### SHORT-TAILED SHEARWATER *ARDENNA TENUIROSTRIS*

The short-tailed shearwater, or muttonbird, is in fact Australia's most common seabird, with an estimated 23 million migrating to breed and nest along our southeastern coastlines. It is not known exactly where they spend the rest of the year but research suggests they fly a round journey of 15,000 kilometres to the Bering Strait and back. They have always been hunted and eaten by Aboriginal Australians and later by colonial settlers. Early accounts indicate the population of muttonbirds around Wilsons Promontory was much, much higher. Matthew Flinders wrote, in 1798, that he witnessed a single flock of at least 100 million birds in Bass Strait.



The magnificent view at Squeaky Beach



bicker before, one-by-one, they fly off to another section of forest.

#### DAY 4 – ROARING MEG TO OBERON BAY (9.4KM)

The diversity of environments in Wilsons Promontory National Park is astounding for such a small area of wilderness. The park protects 50,460 hectares and it contains unique plants and ecosystems from cool temperate rainforest dominated by Myrtle Beech through to White Mangrove, which is the southernmost occurrence of mangroves in the world. On our penultimate day, we emerge from the lush forests around Roaring Meg Creek and onto the high heath covered plateau around Martins Hill. The variety of plants is extraordinary with many of them in flower. There is a road that cuts across the plateau towards Halfway Hut but there is also a much nicer foot track for the first couple of kilometres. Along here we are surrounded once more by the sweet-smelling flowers we encountered at Kersops Peak. At Halfway Hut we fill up with water, spy some blue wrens in the long grass and come across our first "busy" campsite, with three tents and half a dozen people enjoying a slow start to their day. Then it's down the road again and into a whole new type of ecosystem – rare coastal grassy woodlands along the track out to Oberon Bay. We are getting quite close to the end of our loop but decide to stop at Oberon Bay for the night rather than pushing on. There is no fresh water at this bay, so again some planning is required to ensure you have adequate supplies if wanting to stop the night.

The campground is a maze of private sites tucked amongst the gnarly, windswept trees behind the bay. After four days of walking around the southern reaches of the park I can still count on one hand the number of groups we have seen. At Oberon Bay it is much the same; just us and one group of eight adults and students. They busy themselves in the high dunes to the south and so the long expanse of the bay is ours to explore. There is a bizarre array of flotsam and jetsam washed up on the beach: a dead gannet, more muttonbird corpses, half a dozen lengths of cut timber, buoys, fishing line and too much plastic and rubbish for anyone to doubt that we humans are guilty of fouling our own nest. The campground is full of other beach finds – old plastic chairs, tables creatively constructed from driftwood and rope strung up as clotheslines.

To the north, Mt Oberon dominates the landscape and it seems to be drawing in a change of fortune. Grey cloud blows in from the northwest. The wind picks up and a cold, pale sheet of rain heads towards us. Our



*On the path above Little Oberon Bay*

good luck with the weather changes. The tropical paradise fantasy is well and truly shattered as The Prom delivers some of its more renowned, unpredictable and inclement weather.

#### DAY 5 – OBERON BAY TO TIDAL RIVER (7.6KM)

Low mist drifts down off Mount Oberon to the headlands and beaches. It is a grey, drizzly morning as we set off on the final short walk back to our car. There is not enough rain to obscure the tracks of a wombat that has meandered across the sandy slopes of Little Oberon Bay during the night. Following its tracks, we notice it stops to inspect and nudge the dead muttonbirds scattered along the sand. At Norman Point, visibility is just a few hundred metres and granite boulders loom like huge, pale ghosts floating above the coastal heath.

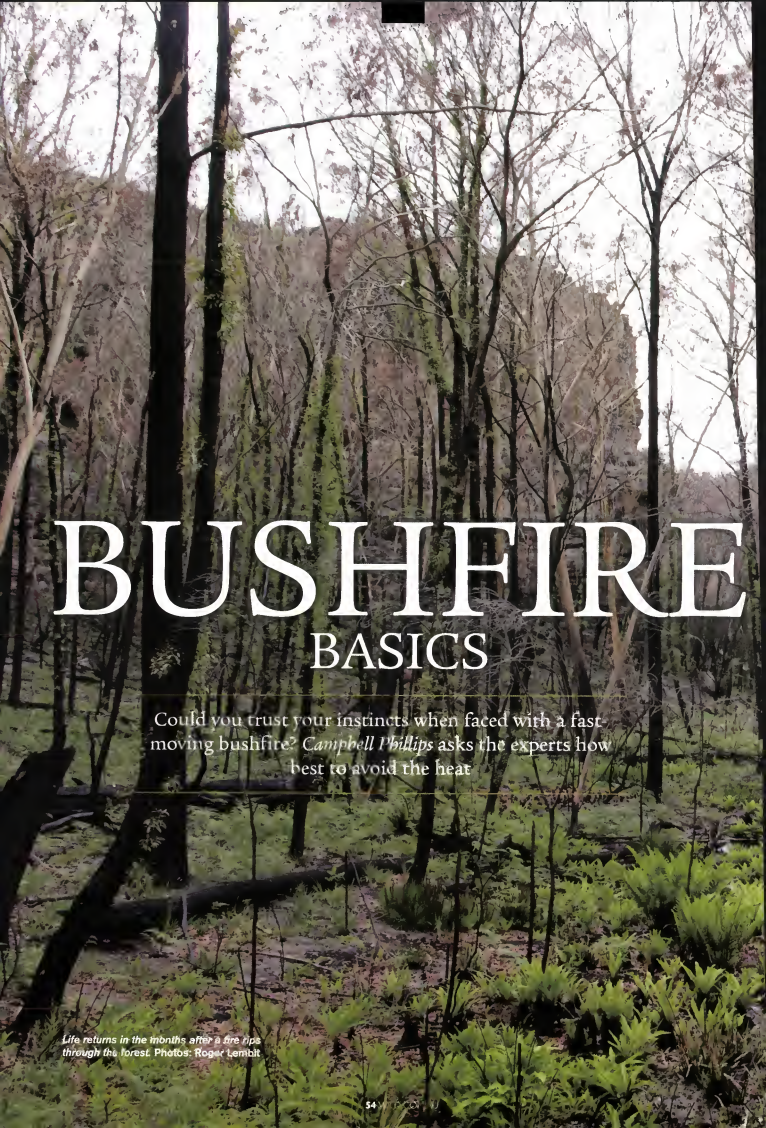
The weather, however, is restless. It changes as we head towards Norman Beach. The cloud lifts and the sun peaks through, forcing us to stop and pack away our rain jackets. As Tidal River comes into view, people are already heading out for a morning swim. Children with bright surfboards play amongst the waves and two couples walk the length of the beach. A large Pacific Gull is perched on the rocks watching for the movement of crabs amongst the bull kelp.

From above Norman Beach there is barely any sign of the extensive network of campsites, accommodation houses, amenities and infrastructure that make up the main Tidal River visitors area. Considering it can house more than 4,000 visitors in peak season this is no mean feat.

We wander into Tidal River along the South Norman Bay Track. It leads us through a pretty tunnel of paperbarks, past some flowering native fuchsia and we surprise some kangaroos tucked amongst the trees. Even for a Friday the Tidal River village shop and massive campground is surprisingly quiet. Maybe we have just lucked it, but I also think avoiding holiday periods, walking mid-week, and slightly off-season has helped us escape the huge crowds that obviously fill this park in summer.

Our 60-kilometre loop walk ends at the takeaway shop with a hamburger and hot chips, but the holiday is not over yet. That afternoon there is time to cram in some extra side trips. Wilsons Promontory National Park boasts the best network of walking trails in Victoria. In the afternoon we take in the Pillar Point Walk, Squeaky Beach and Whiskey Bay and spend the evening trailing wombats around the campground watching with fascination their dedication and focus when it comes to eating grass.

The last morning, on the drive out, there is time to walk the Lilly Pilly Gully Nature Walk. This easy 3.5 kilometre loop takes us through one of Australia's southernmost examples of warm temperate rainforest with lilly pilly and blackwood and sassafras trees. A boardwalk winds around beneath a dense canopy of magical warm temperate rainforest. It gets me thinking again. Probably, at some point in history, Wilsons Promontory was a tropical paradise and the five days of warm, brilliantly coloured, idyllic walking I have just experienced was a window into the true, ancient soul of this remarkable landscape. **W**



# BUSHFIRE BASICS

Could you trust your instincts when faced with a fast-moving bushfire? *Campbell Phillips* asks the experts how best to avoid the heat

Life returns in the months after a fire rips through the forest. Photos: Roger Lembit

It's the height of the summer season and from the moment the sun rises above the horizon you can feel the temperature soaring despite the rising wind.

By mid-morning, you can see the heat haze rising from the trail ahead. The scent of eucalypt oil is sharp and cloying, and you wonder if it's possible that the gum leaves might spontaneously burst into flame. Days like these are a constant source of concern for just about anyone in Australia, but you're kilometres away from the nearest vehicles, dwellings and, possibly, people. If a bushfire were to begin somewhere nearby, you'll need all your luck and a wealth of knowledge to stand a chance of survival.

Recent literature regarding bushfires in Australia supports the theory that climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of the phenomena.

**Be Prepared: Climate Change and the Australian Bushfire Threat** is one such review. Written by professors Lesley Hughes and Will Steffen for the Climate Council of Australia, the report acknowledges that high variability of data and a lack of detailed information over a historical period makes predicting or identifying broad trends in local bushfires very difficult. What the report does state is that extreme fire weather has been increasing over the past 30 years and, more worryingly, the fire season in southeast Australia is becoming longer and this is expected to worsen in the coming years.

'Fire frequency and intensity is expected to increase substantially in coming decades, especially in those regions currently most affected by bushfires, and where a substantial proportion of the Australian population lives,' the report predicts.

Data from the Bureau of Meteorology confirms these predictions, showing that Australia has just suffered through its two warmest spring seasons on record, with the average temperature for September to November in 2014 rising 1.67 degrees above the long-term average. That's 0.1 degrees warmer than the average for spring in 2013. While greater investment into emergency services, rescue and preventative measures will likely increase in tandem with the increased temperature and subsequent fire danger, outdoor enthusiasts must also take their personal safety into their own hands when it comes to bushfire safety.

The first step to take, advises bushwalking instructor for Scouts Australia, Frank Barr, is to understand the level of risk presented by

the area you're going into ahead of time. "Currently, fire risk is determined on a scale of 0 to 100+," Barr says. "This rating is determined by factors including forecast temperature, relative humidity, wind speed and direction, vegetation type, fuel volume and the number of days since it last rained." By understanding how these factors impact on fires, you'll have a better idea of knowing when a place is just too risky for venturing in, without needing access to the internet or radios for a fire report.

#### BEFORE YOU LEAVE HOME

While it's nice to think we are savvy enough to survive in the wild without technology of any kind, the simple fact is that emergencies do occur and in those situations it's always preferable to be prepared.

For this very reason, Andrew Kaye, community engagement coordinator for the Blue Mountains District of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service, advocates downloading the 'Fires Near Me' mobile app and to "check it regularly."

"You should have at least two forms of communication tools with you when

heading into remote places, regardless of the place or the time of year," Kaye says. "Ideally a mobile phone, a radio device and/or a PLB/EPiRB should all be considered – especially during fire season."

"Telling someone your plans about where you're going and when you'll be back may save your life. Should all else fail, that person can alert authorities of your plans and possible location. Helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft may be diverted to commence a search and rescue operation."

Bushwalkers like to travel light, and that's a good reason to try to ensure the gear you carry serves multiple purposes. This can lead to some creative thinking, says Barr.

"For example, a woolen jumper serves equally well in protection from hypothermia as it does from flame."

Barr advocates the use of cotton or wool clothing over synthetics, as these tend to be more fire retardant and aren't likely to melt onto skin. The addition of a wool blanket in your kit may add weight, but this can be used as an additional layer of protection when faced with fire.

"In general, if you are in a bushfire-risk wilderness area, you should be equipped to completely cover your body with fire resistant clothing if need be. In addition, your footwear should also be complete and robust – leather is recommended." Another important multi-purpose inclusion is water. Not only is water a necessity in terms of hydration, it can also be used to dampen clothing and create moist breathing masks as required.

"In this situation, stagnant or fresh is not important," Barr advises.

#### MAKING AN ESCAPE

At midday, you find yourself spending as much time in the shade as possible. It has to be above 40 degrees by now, you think to yourself, and although the sweat continues to run into your eyes and down your back, you're conscious of conserving as much water as possible – you may need it later. Although there doesn't appear to be a wisp of cloud in the air, there's an odd haze that leeches the saturation of colour from the sky. As you begin to wonder about the ramifications of this development, the swift wind brings a hint of smoke to your nostrils. For a moment you stop sweating entirely. Fire!

The majority of information on bushfires advises people to simply not be present in an area that's under threat, unless in the case



#### FIRE DANGER METERS

The CSIRO has released simple calculators to assist in predicting the risk and spread of fires in both forest and grassland areas, which can be accessed via the CSIRO website. While the CSIRO doesn't claim any guarantee for their accuracy of these calculators, it nevertheless encourages everyone to consider downloading and using them prior to going bush. These calculators are provided in the form of downloadable software applications.



[www.csiro.au/Outcomes/Safeguarding-Australia/Forest-Fire-Danger-Meter](http://www.csiro.au/Outcomes/Safeguarding-Australia/Forest-Fire-Danger-Meter)



that your home is situated there and you've undertaken steps to prepare yourself thoroughly.

Unfortunately for bushwalkers, paddlers and other outdoor adventurers, this isn't always an option.

Just a few years ago in 2011, several ultramarathon runners in the Kimberley discovered how suddenly bushfires can appear, and how life threatening they can be. Turia Pitt, 24, and Kate Sanderson, 35, both suffered extensive burns to between 60 and 80 per cent of their bodies when a fire accelerated up the gorge they were running in, effectively trapping them.

They and another two runners were airlifted to hospital to receive treatment, but the physical and mental scars will be a long time healing.

By some estimation, these runners were

lucky to escape with their lives and there are plenty of cases where others aren't as lucky. "Documentation abounds on bushfires in wilderness areas that would be classified as unsurvivable," explains Barr. "Crown fires can spot ahead of the main front several kilometres in advance, which may act to deprive the main front of fuel, but it also creates a very large area with no defined direction or safe refuge."

#### STEP BY STEP

1. Once you have detected a bushfire in your vicinity, through sight or smell, it's important to keep calm and assess your situation.

"The result of this assessment will be to take action based on your perceived threat level, from 'dire' (time to activate that PLB) to 'safe' (sit and wait for the threat level to change)," says Barr.

The variables you'll need to try and take into account include things like:

- Distance, direction and speed of the fire (due to wind factors)
- Likely escalation of intensity (as a result of fuel nearby)
- Distance and direction to a safe place
- The size of your party and the condition of its members
- Type of the surrounding terrain
- Slope aspect

In the majority of cases, if you're under threat of fire, you'll want to place a triple-0 call as soon as possible unless you have access to a PLB device (they're more reliable).

Kaye advises you "be as specific as possible when referencing your location."

"Cite grid references from a map, or GPS coordinates from a smart phone app where possible. Then include added visual clues and landmarks for additional context."

2. Having alerted the authorities to your danger, the next step will be to make a call as to whether it's possible to remove yourself from danger.

As Kaye says: "While fire may appear largely unpredictable, there are some common trends that you can use to your advantage and make an escape."

"For instance, fire tends to burn more slowly downhill, while slopes facing the south-east tend to be wetter, or have more damp vegetation (due to less exposure to sunlight)," he explains.

There is also a general consensus that if it's possible to move into an area the fire has already burnt through, this is a reasonable haven as it's unlikely to have enough fuel remaining to burn again. The only caveat is to be careful around burnt trees, as they may still be smouldering or could fall over at any time.

Barr also points out other characteristics of fires that are important to understand, such



as the way they radiate heat, or the danger presented by large amounts of smoke.

"Typically, fire fronts pass quickly (sometimes in less than a minute), but they bring unsurvivable temperatures with them," he says. "The other main danger is asphyxiation and scorched lungs due to the superheated air."

For this reason, outrunning a bushfire is not always the smartest method to avoid being hurt. Instead, experts suggest attempting to move out of the anticipated danger zone at a suitable angle and preferably long before the fire arrives.

"Ideally, you'll want to move at a 90-degree angle from the approaching front, should time permit."

3. As the fire draws near, any gear you have that may serve to protect you should now come into play.

It may feel stiflingly hot, but wrapping your head and body in a woollen blanket will help insulate you against heat and flame, while wetting a scarf or bandages and wrapping them about your face and head will cool you and the air you're inhaling. Masks such as these should also serve to filter some of the damaging smoke from the air.

Finally, if you are still able to reach help via radio or mobile phone, placing another call for help and to update your location could be a life-saving decision.

4. Sometimes, no matter what, the fire will still overtake you. In this case, it becomes pertinent to stop and prepare to protect yourself as best you can – if you're caught on the move when the front arrives, there's little chance of surviving a serious fire.

Barr suggests seeking out "the largest, lowest,

#### BUSHFIRE SURVIVAL GEAR

It makes sense to carry the following items at any time of year, but this is especially the case during the fire months (generally speaking October–March).

- Map and compass set
- Mobile phone/portable radio
- PLB/EPIRB
- Fire retardant clothing (e.g. wool and cotton material)
- Woollen blanket
- Water

#### TYPES OF FIRE: GRASS FIRE

Different types of fires have different characteristics and there are some common misconceptions here. When assessing bushfire danger, it's extremely important to pay close attention to the type and amount of vegetation in the area.

For example, grass fires can actually be very intense and devastating, while generally travelling faster than a forest fire. Grass fires can also begin burning earlier in the day as the grass dries out much faster than other types of vegetation.

Running through low grass fires has been suggested as a method of escape, but this is really only possible if the fire is burning lower than waist height and is moving swiftly.

Grass fires are usually well defined and easier to observe, being less likely to spot and cause confusion between burnt and unburnt areas.





clear area possible."

"This includes rivers and dams, but it should only be considered as a last possible defence against the fire."

Once you've found a suitable site that's within your range, quickly remove as much combustible material as possible.

"In addition to woollen clothing or blankets, dirt and sand can be used to cover any exposed body parts," Barr says.


#### EXIT STRATEGY

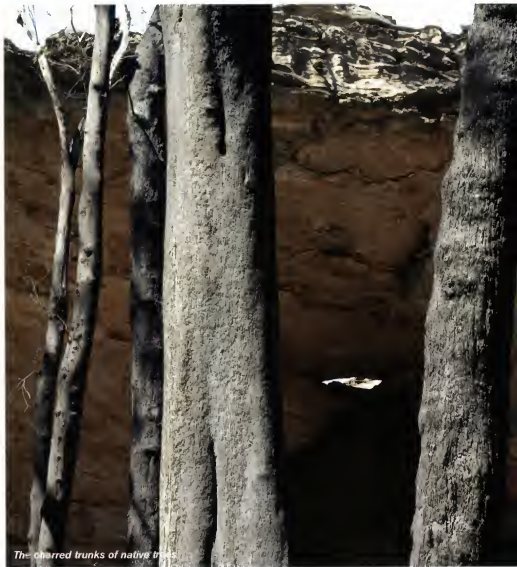
Your mouth is dry, your eyes streaming but there's only one sensation you're truly aware of: heat.

Staring up at the monochromatic sky, you slowly come to realise that you've somehow managed to survive a fire front. Throwing off your blanket, you sit up and realise the broad clearing you're sitting in appears almost as grey as the sky above.

The only difference is the blackened, scarred wood of the trees that border your safe haven.

You haven't survived completely unscathed. Clothes and hair alike have been singed to ash, while painful burns are making themselves known everywhere that the skin was even slightly exposed. Even worse, you realise that the pain in your chest signifies damage to your lungs. Hopefully it isn't severe.

You are now out of the worst of the danger and provided you were able to make contact with the authorities beforehand, you should be able to sit and await rescue and all-important medical attention. Depending on how far away that help is, it may be pertinent to seek out any nearby water sources (if available). Surviving a bushfire makes for thirsty work. 



The charred trunks of native trees

#### ABOUT THE EXPERTS



##### FRANK BARR

Frank is an experienced bushwalker, and has been instructing bushwalking for Scouts Australia,

NSW Branch for over 25 years. Frank is also a member of the Hazelbrook Rural Fire Service.

##### SCOUTS AUSTRALIA

Scouts Australia provides young Aussies aged six to 25 with fun and challenging opportunities to grow through

adventure. With almost 70,000 members, Scouts Australia is the nation's largest youth leadership development organisation.



##### ANDREW KAYE

Andrew has been a volunteer and staff member of the NSW Rural Fire Service since 2007. He has been

working in the Blue Mountains District for the past two years.

##### NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

The NSW Rural Fire Service has over 73,000 members, making it the largest volunteer fire service in the world. Its

volunteers come from all walks of life and fulfill roles not just in front line fire fighting, but across all functions to ensure the RFS remains the world's finest.



# Beginner's guide to *stand-up paddleboarding*



Two stand-up paddleboarders pose in Maui  
Photo: John Carter/Fanatic

## GEAR CHECKLIST

**1. A stand-up paddleboard that's right for you.**

That is, choose a board that suits your height, weight, ability and what type of water you want to use it on. If you're planning a multi-day SUP river tour, opt for a longer touring board, as opposed to a shorter, more narrow board that is more suitable for surf.

**2. There are various types of paddles on the market, and where they'll differ most is in weight.**

Entry-level paddles will often be constructed out of aluminium. Then the materials progress to a mix of bamboo and carbon, while top performance models will be completely carbon. Buy one that is also adjustable, so you can change it to suit your height, and consider rail protectors on the blade to limit damage.

**3. Consider a leg rope.** Although leg ropes are mostly important for SUPing in surf, if you come across white water or fall off in an unexpected eddy, you may be wishing your board didn't race off down the river without you.**4. It's worth purchasing a SUP board bag,** as this will help protect it against damage and heat while in transit. You can also get bags that go around the blade of your paddle, which are great for protecting the rails when your gear is rolling around in the back of your car.**5. Depending on where you are touring, you might want to consider wetsuit booties.** These will protect your feet when getting on and off the board, especially if the river floor or bank is rocky. They will also offer sun protection for your feet.**6. Speaking of sun protection,** it's a must on long touring days. So is a broad-brimmed hat, a rash shirt for fair-skinned lads and lasses, and sun-cream.

Simple to get started, stand-up paddleboarding offers all comers a new way of exploring Australia's coasts and waterways, reports *Jennifer Ennion*

**G**liding along a glassy river as walls of limestone climb around you is one of the simple joys of stand-up paddleboarding. Imagine a gentle soundtrack of Australian birdcalls mixed with the rhythmic tune of your paddle dipping into the water and out again. Ahead, the landscape is empty, still. Just around the bend, your isolated campsite awaits. This is the beauty of exploring on a stand-up paddleboard (SUP) - one of the fastest growing water sports in Australia. What makes SUPing so appealing, is its accessibility to a broad range of people.

"You can be male or female, you can be young or old, you can have prior sporting injuries, be any size, any athletic ability and you can still go stand-up paddling because there's gear out there that's going to suit everyone," says Josh Fletcher, the sales and operations manager for Fanatic Stand-Up Paddleboards Australia.

It's a sport that appears to appeal to everyone, Fletcher says, with just as many women as men giving it a go. That's the beauty of it, he adds, and it's still growing, not just in Australia but worldwide. In terms of growth, the number of people taking to SUPing has overtaken how popular windsurfing was in the 1980s and '90s, as well as the popularity of kitesurfing now. That's partly because of the lack of obstacles compared to other water-based activities. You don't have to wait for the right wind direction or strength as you do for kitesurfing, and you require far fewer lessons to get up and going. "It's not weather dependent and therefore you don't need surf or wind, and can always find somewhere that you can go paddling," says Fletcher.

It's simple to get the hang of SUPing and then it's just a matter of practice, he adds.

There is also a quick learning curve, and, unlike surfing, you don't need to go SUPing every day to maintain your fitness and skill level. It helps, too, that it has a 'cool factor'. Fletcher says people who can't surf will still feel like they are part of Australia's surfing culture when they are on a SUP. For water lovers, SUPing also allows you to be out on a river or lake in winter, without needing to feel the chill of the water itself.

Flat-water paddling has attracted a large following of women who may be tired of large surf, enjoy the activity as a way of keeping up their core strength, or want a change from their kayak or canoe.

Bryan Hughes, owner of Stand-Up Paddle Tasmania, says you get hooked to SUPing. "The stand-up paddle just seems to have something to it but it is so simple - there's only you and the paddle and board," says Hughes, who is based in Bicheno, on the east coast.

"You're looking into the water (and) it's like being in a glass-bottomed boat on a clear day.

"I guess you could call Tasmania a place where paddling is a real adventure. You can get away to some uncrowded areas and truly have a wild experience."

**STARTING OUT**

There are a few simple rules to remember when learning to SUP. First, you should make sure you have the correct posture. That is standing near the centre of the board, with your feet apart, knees bent and back straight, says Hughes. You're stomach should also be held in, while your arms should be straight so they pull the power of the paddle back to your core muscles, he explains.

When holding your paddle on your right side, your right hand should grip the pole,



SUPing on a Fanatic board in Maui  
Photo: John Carter

while your left hand crosses your body to grip the handle at the top of the paddle. When you swap sides, you should also change your hold.

The stroke technique is similar to kayaking in that as you move the paddle away from your body to place into the water, your forearms should be straight, not bent. You should only bend your elbows when you pull the paddle back towards you (or towards the back of the board).

Where SUPing differs to kayaking is that you only have one blade and need to frequently swap paddle sides. This can be a little frustrating when you're learning but you'll get quicker at it and won't need to do it as often if you're on a touring or race board.

Overall, SUPing is more about spending time on your board - getting comfortable with your balance and your style of stroke - than tackling difficult technique, says Fletcher.

#### GEAR UP

The broad range of SUPing products on the market makes it easy for people to try out the sport before investing large sums of money on high-end gear. When you're starting out, Fletcher says your best bet is to buy an all-round board. That way you'll have something that's easy for you to get your balance on as a beginner but that will continue to cater to you as your ability progresses. Once you know what kind of SUPing you enjoy most, you can upgrade to a board that's more suitable, such as one that's good for long-distance touring. Touring boards are generally longer (about 335 to 367 centimetres) than the standard

surf designs, while race boards are longer again (about 370 to 427 centimetres).

"The longer the board, the more glide it's going to have, so the straight-line speed is going to hold," says Fletcher.

"So if you stop paddling, it will continue to move through the water, and that's normally because they've got a higher volume, so they've got more float. Whereas if you went to a surfboard, they're quite small (and) they obviously sink a little bit more, so they're not going to glide as much."

Another benefit of touring boards is that their response to turning is slower. This works well for expedition-style journeys because you'll get about five or six good paddle strokes in on one side of the board before you need to change to the other side. This helps keep up momentum and rhythm over long distances. In contrast, shorter boards are more reactive and you'll need to swap your paddle sides every two or so strokes.

Although racing boards are also good for flat-water journeys, they are more narrow than a touring board. So even though they will be faster, they will also be less stable. The biggest design feature to affect a paddler's stability is the width of the board, says Fletcher.

"So the wider the board, the easier it is to stand on," he adds.

Touring boards will set you back about \$1,800 for a basic construction and \$2,200 for a higher end wood construction, depending on length. Most boards will be made out of epoxy resin with a foam core, however there are also inflatable boards on the market, as well as a combination of

epoxy with a bamboo deck. The PVC inflatable boards are popular in the northern hemisphere, where there is a large expedition scene where people hike to a remote destination with their board deflated and folded down to the size of a backpack.

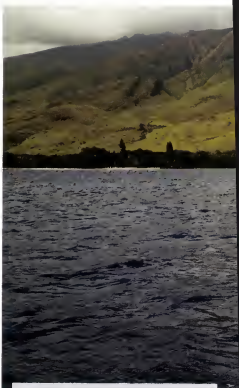
"So you could be 4WDing or hiking and you're right in the depths of remoteness," says Fletcher.

Australia is only a new market for inflatable SUPs and the biggest issue Fletcher has seen with them so far is that users aren't pumping them up properly.

"The boards need to hold quite a high pressure," he says. "If you pump them up to what's recommended, they actually paddle pretty good."

Inflatable boards are worth looking into if you want to try SUPing on challenging water (such as white water), although this should be left to experienced riders who've already tackled smoother conditions.

As for the correct height of your paddle, there are different rules depending on who you talk to. Fletcher advises ensuring your



#### TOP FLAT-WATER SUP SPOTS

- \* Murray River, NSW, Vic and SA
- \* Swan River, WA
- \* Georges River, NSW
- \* Narrabeen Lakes, NSW
- \* Upper Derwent River, Tas
- \* Gordon River, below Franklin, Tas



paddle stands about half a foot (30 centimetres) above your head.

## COMMON MISTAKES

There are two main mistakes that beginners make - using the wrong equipment and going out in the wrong conditions.

"You're quite susceptible to wind standing up, so if you're out trying to learn and it's a bit choppy and you're trying to paddle into a headwind, it's not going to work for you," Fletcher says.

"But if you go out somewhere nice and closed and clean, and there's no wind and it's flat, you'll pick it up pretty quick."

When it comes to equipment, it's important not to use a paddle that's too short or heavy, or ride a board that is the wrong length and design. But your first step, says Hughes, should be signing up to a SUP lesson. This will help beginners decide what gear they feel most comfortable using and give them time to get used to technique.

Chris Jones, Director of Griffon Expeditions, says people going river SUPing for the first time need to understand the dynamics of a

river environment.

"In Australia, there's a lot of what we call strainers - trees that have fallen over into the current - and swimming into one of those can be quite dangerous," he says.

Jones is an expert in river conditions,



Stand-up paddleboarding on Denison Lagoon, Bicheno, in Tasmania. Photo: Bryan Hughes (Stand Up Paddle Tasmania)

having been part of the first team of paddleboarders who journeyed down the lower Franklin River in Tasmania at the start of 2013. The group of four went when water levels were low, to avoid large sections of white water. They still tackled their fair share of rapids but Jones advises other paddleboarders against doing so, especially beginners.

"To do a river like the Franklin you'd certainly want to have solid white water skills, so either in a raft or a kayak," he says. SUPs are not suited to hard white water, he adds, but they are great for easy river journeys. He recommends beginners choose a calm river protected from wind. And if your preferred locale is affected by a headwind or gusts, you simply find somewhere else, adds Fletcher.

"The beauty of SUP is you can always find somewhere to go and do it where conditions are what you want, it's just a matter of exploring a little bit." **W**



[www.fanatic.com/sup](http://www.fanatic.com/sup)  
[www.standuppaddletasmania.com.au](http://www.standuppaddletasmania.com.au)



Taking in the beautiful coastal mountains of Maui on a stand-up paddleboard Photo: Josh Fletcher

# Super food: Persian-style

What's all the buzz about "super foods"? *Andrew Davison* plumbs the depths of traditional dining to produce two recipes truly worthy of the name

Suddenly we have become interested in the foods international communities have been eating for centuries; they have come to our tables under the guise of "super foods". Kale, cress, mustard, endives and many more, all with claims of some super powers from weight loss to cures for cancer. Leafy greens such as spinach and parsley that have been on the Australian table for years are making resurgence as the new alimentary wonder.

But the nature of most greens old or new, familiar or exotic is they carry nutrients that we need for a healthy existence. Their super powers are in the fact that they are largely better for you to eat than deep fried chicken.

When it comes to bushwalking, particularly on extended walks, it is often difficult to get these healthy (super) greens into our diet.

But it was in the cosy confines of a Persian home that I discovered a dish of greens that could carry the label of super food and could be carried on an extended walk. It was a dish cooked by a friendly woman and eaten while seated on a hand woven Persian carpet covering a mud floor of a small home nestled in the southern Iranian mountains. It was a simple, but delicious dish that is commonly seen on Iranian tables, of stewed leafy greens, kidney beans and meat flavoured with dried limes, lemon and turmeric.

As I sat cross-legged on the carpet eating the dish with my right hand and pieces of un-leaven bread, I wondered if the Persians were aware all this time they were eating a super food?

Below is an adaptation of the meal I ate in the living quarters of that Persian home. The dish counts on you having the ability to dry the necessary ingredients, however some Persian grocery stores sell a mix of dried greens ready for the dish.



## DRIED FRUIT AND NUT STEW

### Serves 2

The following dish is also an adaptation of an Iranian meal; the blend of fruits and nuts with meat is excellent. With the dried meat this dish will last weeks in your pack and is tasty enough to serve at a dinner party.

¼ cup crushed almonds and walnuts  
200g minced beef or lamb meat  
½ small brown onion minced  
¼ cup red lentils (*Masoor Dahl*)  
Salt and pepper  
¼ cup finely diced dried apricots and dried apples  
4-6 pitted prunes  
½ teaspoon saffron powder  
Salt and pepper to taste

### AT HOME

Heat a small amount of oil in a large fry pan and sauté the onion, now add the minced meat and fry until cooked. Remove, cool and dry in a food dehydrator  
Sauté nuts in a dry fry pan until browned, lightly crush.  
Finely chop the dried fruits.

### IN THE FIELD

Place the dried meat and onion along with the red lentils into the largest pot you have, add a cup of water and cook over a low heat for five minutes, now add the dried fruits and nuts along with a further cup of water and cook for a further five minutes. Now add the saffron, salt and pepper. Stir through. Serve with rice.

## SABZI (STEWED GREENS)

Serves 2

Below is an adaptation of the meal I ate in the living quarters of that Persian home. The dish counts on you having the ability to dry the necessary ingredients, however some Persian grocery stores sell a mix of dried greens ready for the dish.

½ cup each of fresh Spinach, Dill, Celery tops, Coriander, Parsley, Kale, Spring onions (totalling 2 cups of dried greens.) Or any other greens you fancy, silver beet, carrot tops, beetroot tops, cress, mustard, endives, mint

200g of beef or lamb (if you wish, you can omit the meat and replace with potato dumplings: see issue 138 for potato dumpling recipes)

1 teaspoon of turmeric

1 teaspoon of fresh ground pepper salt to taste  
1 dried lime (optional) found in Persian grocery  
The juice of one lemon

### AT HOME

Mince all the greens finely and place in a dehydrator or oven and dry until crisp. Slice meat into strips ½ centimetre thick and dehydrate as directed by your food dehydrator.  
Pack all dry ingredients together.

### IN THE FIELD

Add all the dry ingredients into a pot and cover with water and allow to stew over a slow heat. Stir occasionally adding more water as necessary until the meat is rehydrated; now add the lemon juice and salt to taste. Serve *with rice*.

## FORAGING FOR A SABZI

Wild green leafy vegetables most likely saved many scurvy stricken lives amongst the convicts of the first fleet. Wild vegetables also made their way into the diets of early settlers and outback drovers who found the necessary sustenance from bush food to stave off diseases while also adding freshness and variety to their diets. Much of this knowledge of wild foods has been forgotten over the years, but many of us on bushwalks can take advantage of the wild bounty around us. There are quite a large number of wild leafy greens that can be found in almost all environments and most of them would be suited to add a little zest to your 'sabzi', or simply bulk out your dehydrated supply of leafy greens.

- **Scrub nettle or stinging nettle** - Commonly found throughout south-eastern Australia, the stinging nettle was for inducing a hot stinging sensation on ankles and calves when passing through a patch, allowing as a guide to their identification. Stinging nettle is a low herb of triangular leaves with serrated edges and fine hairs. Not eaten raw for obvious reasons, the tops of the nettle can be boiled and added to soups and stews
- **Wild cress** - Australia has more than a hundred native members of the cress family, found from coastal forests to outback flood plains. Of note is the marsh cress, the soft leaves are deeply lobed and 3-12cm long. Growing in stream margins and moist areas, the untidy herb produces a cluster of tiny flowers with four yellow petals. The slight spicy taste of the herb can add a tang to your meals. Another common, however introduced cress is water cress, growing in flowing streams throughout south-eastern Australia, the discovery of this herb on a bushwalk offers a welcome addition to biscuits and cheese, salads, soups and sabzi. Where the cress is sourced should be carefully considered; if the water it grows in is polluted, the plant should be avoided.
- Another leafy plant worth noting is **New Zealand spinach**; despite its name it is an Australian native. Its thick, triangular leaves have a flavour very similar to commercial spinach. New Zealand spinach is an herb that is commonly found amongst arid woodlands and salt marshes.

**WARNING:** Foraging for certain herbs and vegetables can be dangerous and in some cases illegal. Be sure to consult an expert prior to foraging or eating wild plants.



## TRIED AND TESTED

# Recently, the *Wild* team headed for the hills to pitch and test a selection of three season tents



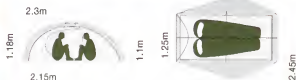
Like so many other products manufactured in our modern economy, camping gear simply doesn't last as long as it once did. The constant ambition for brands to produce gear that is lighter, more versatile and more affordable has left more than a few consumers disillusioned as they find themselves replacing things (such as tents) every three-10 years rather than every 10-20. One need only search for 'planned obsolescence' online to discover just how hotly debated purchase cycles have become; there's little doubt that it's causing friction between the brands and their customers.

However, tents haven't yet reached the dizzying heights of churn achieved in the likes of the digital devices market and it remains possible to select a product that suits both personal and budgetary requirements without having to delve too deeply into the technical detail.

In this Tried & Tested feature, we took a selection of three season tents – both one and two person – up into the Strathbogie Mountains in Victoria's north for two nights. There we reviewed

the tents according to how easy they were to set up, how stable they appeared under strong (but not gale-force) winds, and how comfortable they were for the numbers of sleepers advertised to fit. During this time it rained once, but not heavily. We have therefore included each tent floor's waterproof rating as a benchmark for this factor.

After all is said and done, the materials and design of many of these tents are quite similar, so there's no doubt individual requirements and tastes will come into play when selecting a favourite. All are sturdy, well waterproofed and are colour-coded so as to make pitching for the first time as simple as possible. The one tent that could be said to stand out is the German-designed Tatonka Arctis 2.235. Based on a classic design, the innovative way that the entire construction comes clipped together right out of the bag makes pitching fast and simple. On top of which, the floor space and vestibules combined make for a truly comfortable two person hiking tent. *Read on for the full comparison.*



### Exped Mira II

Two vestibules, doors and pockets in canopy makes for a functional two-person hiking tent. When pitching the poles must be threaded into the canopy, but this was surprisingly easy to accomplish.







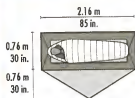
### Marmot Tungsten 1P

Steep walls, pre-bends and clip placement provides some added roominess to this solo tent, however I found it relies heavily on the pressure of the fly to form the correct shape, which requires some fine tuning. The pegs included also seem flimsy compared to some of the competition. Includes lamp shade pocket as well as gear pockets.



### Mont Moondance 1

The internally accessed roof vent and mesh panels are a must when using this tent in the warmer months, being on the more waterproofed end of the scale for 3 season tents. Quick to set up as long as you ensure the combined poleset is facing the right way up, and with the longer spoke poles matched to the correct end of the tent.

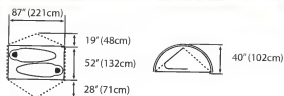


### MSR Hubba NX

The non-tapered floor and symmetrical geometry adds space to this hiking tent, which sports the kind of all-rounder feature set that bushwalking and mountain climbing enthusiasts will love. The external doors include roll-up and 'stargazer' arrangements.

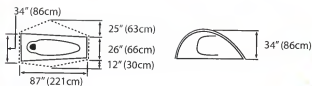






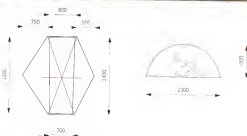
#### North Face Talus 2

This tent aims to create as much room as possible to allow for two sleepers, including a gear loft secondary vestibule only accessed from within for storage. This may frustrate some over long treks, as one sleeper will need to climb over the other in order to exit. For this reason some may consider it for use as a one person, but this makes pitching in weather a little difficult.



#### North Face Stormbreak 1

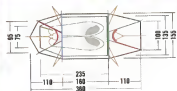
This ultra lightweight hiker doesn't advertise the same waterproofing or denier density has the Talus 2 person, yet it seems quite sturdy nevertheless. Very straightforward to set up and at a highly affordable price, this is ideal for the weekend adventurer.



#### One Planet Goondie 1

Like North Face's 2 person 3 season tent, the Goondie attempts to provide added floorspace, but sacrifices a door in doing so. Straightforward to pitch (might be tough on your own in strong winds), while fabric strength and waterproofing appears more than adequate to handle all but the most extreme weather.





### Tatonka Arctis 2.235

As the only tunnel-based design, this is probably the most comfortable of all the 2 person hiking tents reviewed. All layers arrive pre-clipped together, so pitching couldn't be easier for a 2 person - just peg and thread the poles. Even better, this design allows for the inner tent to be taken down and packed away before the fly, removing the risk of it getting wet in rainy conditions.



No.	Brand & model	Persons	Seasons	Fly	Inner	Floor	Poles	Minimum weight	Floor area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Internal height (cm)	Vestibule (m <sup>2</sup> )	Ease of pitching	Stability	RRP
1	Exped Mira IIw	2	3	30D ripstop polyester	15D ripstop polyester, 15D No-See-Um mesh	70D taffeta nylon (5,000mm water head)	DAC Featherlite TH72M (3)	1.85	2.75	110	1.3	****	****	\$549
2	Marmot Tungsten 1P	1	3	68D polyester taffeta 190T	40D 100% polyester No-See-Um mesh & 68D polyester taffeta	68D polyester taffeta 190T (2,000mm water head)	DAC Featherlite (2)	1.59	1.95	97	0.84	***	***	\$349.95
3	Mont Moondance 1	1	3	40D ripstop nylon	40D ripstop nylon, No-See-Um mesh	70D nylon (10,000mm water head)	DAC Featherlite pole set with dual wishbone hubs & DAC Featherlite ridge pole	1.47	1.74	95	0.77	****	***	\$429.95
4	MSR Hubba NX	1	3	20D X 210T ripstop polyester	20D X 330T ripstop high tenacity nylon, 15D nylon micromesh	30D X 262T ripstop high tenacity nylon (3,000mm water head)	All-in-one DAC Featherlite pole set	1.12	1.67	91	0.84	***	***	\$599
5	North Face Talus 2	2	3	75D polyester	68D ripstop polyester, No-See-Um mesh	70D nylon (3,000mm water head)	DAC Featherlite (3)	1.43	2.92	127	0.79	***	****	\$300
6	North Face Stormbreak 1	1	3	Polyester taffeta	Polyester taffeta, No-See-Um mesh	Polyester taffeta (3,000mm water head)	DAC Featherlite (2)	1.04	1.68	85	0.56	****	***	\$220
7	One Planet Goondie 1	1	3	15D nylon	Breathable, water-resistant nylon	100D high tenacity nylon (5,000mm water head)	DAC Featherlite (3)	1.52	1.84	100	0.86	****	***	\$499
8	Tatonka Arctis 2.235	2	3	40D ripstop nylon 240T	70D ripstop nylon 190T	70D taffeta nylon (10,000mm water head)	7001 T6 aluminium (2)	3	2.53	100	1.4	*****	****	\$429

# Victorian Volcanoes

*Mark Daffey details his four favourite volcano walks in Victoria's Western District*



*Mt Napier is the highest volcanic peak in Victoria's Western District region, with summit views extending to the south coast*  
Photos: Mark Daffey

Australia is a young nation, and evidence of that youthful capriciousness is best exhibited in its southwest, where some 400 volcanic eruption points are spread across a region that traverses two states. Craters, caves, sinkholes and waterfalls – all formed as a result of volcanic activity – can be found in an area known as the Newer Volcanics Province.

This area, from Beachport in South Australia to Colac in Victoria, forms

an internationally recognised geopark, encompassing one or more sites of geological, archaeological, ecological or cultural significance. Called Kanawinka – a Buandik aboriginal term meaning 'Land of Tomorrow' – it is believed to be one of the three largest volcanic plains in the world. It's certainly Australia's most extensive volcanic province and it derives its name from a north-south geological fault that stretches from the Naracoorte Caves in South Australia to

the Bass Strait at Portland, Victoria's first European settlement. Portland marks the beginning and end of the 250 kilometre Great South West Walk, and it's also the logical base from which hikers can set off each day if town comforts are what they hanker for after a sweaty day's walk. The alternative is to camp at the foot of Mount Eccles, the most centrally located of the four volcanoes profiled hereafter. It's also the only one offering formal campground facilities.

## THE WALKS

## Summit Walk, Mount Napier State Park

## WALK AT A GLANCE

Distance: 3km return

Time: 1hr

Start/Finish: Summit Walk car park on Menzies Pit Road



## ACCESS

From the Hamilton-Port Fairy Road, turn into Murroa Lane then Coles Track and drive for four kilometres down Menzies Pit Road to a scoria quarry site. Four-wheel drives are recommended, though two-wheel drives should cope easily in dry weather. Park here or continue on for another 100 metres to the head of the Summit Trail.

## NOTES

It's eight degrees outside when I start my summit walk, making it almost impossible to imagine Mount Napier reaching temperatures around the 1,200 degree mark when it last erupted just 8,000 years ago. The trail to the top of Victoria's loftiest, most recently active volcano is narrow and unmarked but nevertheless well defined. It initially winds through manna gum and blackwood forest that amplifies the squally weather often afflicting these parts, and then climbs steeply to a broad ridge that you can follow to the summit.

Near the top, the forest clears on both sides, allowing fantastic views across the flat, rich farming plains to the east until you reach a minor saddle that opens out to the summit's dry crater. There's a good chance you'll find black swamp wallabies grazing on

the grassy slopes inside the caldera.

A brass plaque beneath a summit trig on the southern crater rim honours Major Thomas Mitchell's 1836 'discovery' of the mountain. Mount Napier's cone rises 150 metres above the surrounding plains to an elevation of 440 metres above sea level and the views from the top extend over a fertile region closely resembling a rain-soaked English countryside during cooler seasons. This is one of Australia's best farming regions and stately homesteads, some of which date back to the nineteenth century, are sprinkled among expansive estates defined by neat rows of pine trees. A total of 34 wind turbines can also be seen along the coast to the south. These are part of the adjacent Codrington and Yambuk wind farms that provide electricity to thousands of homes in the region.

While you're here, stop in at the Byaduk Caves complex on the opposite side of the park. Get to the blink-and-you'll-miss-it town of Byaduk on the Hamilton-MacArthur Road then turn off it and drive for four kilometres down an unsealed road to a car park beside the caves.

Twelve caves make up the Byaduk Caves, though only three are open to the public – Harman's Numbers One and Two Caves and Bridge Cave. Of these, Harman's Number One Cave is the most accessible and largest. The caves are in fact lava tubes – part of a flow that fanned out in four directions. The longest of these extends for 24 kilometres down the Harman Valley. Rocks that are often damp from water dripping down the overhanging cave mouth are slippery, so be careful when you descend into the inky void. Assuming you've brought a powerful torch, you'll notice dark, tiny shapes flittering about in your light beam. These are southern bent-wing bats.

## West &amp; Noels Walk Loop, Mount Richmond National Park

## WALK AT A GLANCE

Distance: 3.7

Time: 2hrs

Start/Finish: At the summit

## ACCESS

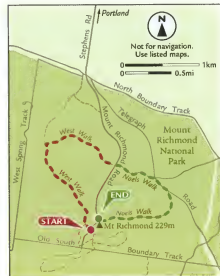
Via the Portland-Nelson Road. Turn left onto Stephens Road and follow the signs to the summit. Mount Richmond is 18 kilometres west of Portland and 362 kilometres west of Melbourne.

## NOTES

This is an unusual mountain to hike on because almost all routes start from the 229-metre summit. You can start from the base of the mountain. But a sealed road leads all the way to a car park and picnic ground at the top, so the summit is a prettier and more logical spot to end your hike and perhaps even start another one.

There are several exceptions to that rule. Part of the Great South West Walk (GSWW) traverses the summit of Mount Richmond and dissects the park via a meandering path that starts in the northwest and continues on towards Cashmore and then Portland in the southeast. The Emu Hill Track also cuts through the park, though perpendicularly this time, until it reaches Emu Hill, just outside the park boundaries in the northeast. So that I could return to my car after hiking here alone, I incorporated part of the GSWW trail into a seamless loop walk.

Of all the four parks covered here, Mount Richmond least resembles an extinct volcano. On approach, it appears little more than a gentle, forested hill, and there's no crater to speak of once you're there. The soil is also very sandy, a result of strong winds blowing inland off Discovery Bay. This is immediately obvious when you follow the West Walk north from the summit car park. The first of several boardwalks emerges after 400 metres and grass trees and stunted stringybarks line a section of the trail where it's possible to gain views towards the coast. After 1.5 kilometres, you'll arrive at a trail junction. Continue along the West Walk track to the right. You'll find that the track you've just left





was like a highway compared to the next kilometre. The track is poorly maintained and often overgrown, with fallen trees and branches frequently barring the way – a result, no doubt, of the fierce weather this part of the country frequently cops. Animals clearly use this track section more than people do. Listen to crimson rosellas chatting away in the treetops and watch that you don't step in the many fresh emu droppings decorating the trail. After around 2.5 kilometres, the trail crosses Mount Richmond Road, which you will have driven up to get to the summit car park. At this point the West Walk ends and Noels Walk begins. By this stage you'll have descended roughly 50 metres vertically and you'll double that soon after crossing the road. After a steep, sandy descent through a minefield of wombat diggings, remember to look up for there are rare views over the volcanic plains and farmland to the east. Being on the leeward side of the mountain, it's also more protected. In summer, that also means it's likely to be hotter on this side of the mountain.

The trail can be damp near to where it joins with Telegraph Road. This is a good opportunity to find emu tracks. And wildflowers are prominent all across the mountain during spring. Follow the gravel road for 250 metres until a track once again cuts through the bushes on the right. This is the start of Noels Walk back to the summit, though signposting isn't obvious when you're coming from this direction. Watch out for echidnas and eastern grey kangaroos as you climb through shiny-leaf peppermint forest. Pockets of manna gums populated by koalas and brown stringybark trees are more prominent near the summit picnic area. And one final word of warning: be vigilant of tiger snakes and copperheads

sunning themselves on the trail during warmer months.

## Lava Canal Trail, Mount Eccles National Park



### WALK AT A GLANCE

**Distance:** 6.5km

**Time:** 2-3hrs

**Start/Finish:** Mt Eccles car park/campground

### ACCESS

Follow Mount Eccles Road for 9 kilometres from Macarthur.

### NOTES

The Parks Victoria Park Notes lists four hiking options here – Natural Bridge, Lake Surprise, Crater Rim and Lava Canal – and all walks start from the car park adjacent to the campground area. Of those, Lava Canal is the longest but also the best because it incorporates a little of each of the other walks. It also has a greater scenic variety, from lava caves that you can enter and forested valleys that are actually collapsed lava tunnels, to elevated viewpoints looking over the mountain's dry and wet craters. Start by following a paved scoria path to an observation deck overlooking the elongated Lake Surprise from its northern end. The spring-fed crater lake measures 700 metres long by 150 metres wide and fills three craters. Its forested basalt slopes are popular roosts for sulphur-crested cockatoos and long-beaked corellas. Descend a wooden stairway to Tunnel Cave on the right. You'll need good footwear for rock hopping and a strong torch to see where you're going; water tends to pool on the cave floor.

The Lake Surprise Trail branches off to the left here and the Crater Rim Trail a little

further on. Stick to the right to continue along the Lava Canal Trail. It's at about this point where the trail name becomes more obvious as you'll be walking through a damp valley dissected by moss-covered stone walls. Aboriginal people also made use of these stones to construct channels, weirs, fish traps and houses that guarded against the weather.

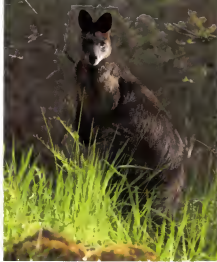
The trail resembles a garden path lined by neatly laid mossy stones, with jagged 15-metre-high lava walls left and right. It's rocky underfoot for the entire length of this valley so be sure to wear good hiking shoes if you want to avoid rolling an ankle. It is perhaps this unevenness that has caused this trail to be graded as 'hard', for it is otherwise a simple, straightforward hike. After several kilometres, a dry stonewall marks a change in direction. The trail climbs out of the lava blister and doglegs to the east. Orange markers show the way. A lava cave just beneath the top is worth exploring but again, you'll need a powerful torch to see how deep it goes.

The track follows a straight dry wall through a eucalypt forest for a kilometre. Keep an eye out for black swamp wallabies. Once the wall ceases, the trail veers left through scrub to Natural Bridge, an earthen arch over the collapsed lava tunnel known as Gothic Cave. Follow the track to the left until you eventually find the dead-end trail into the cave through a narrow lava blister.

Above ground, the track intersects with a gravel road that leads back to the main car park and campground. You have a choice of continuing along the track through another lava canal or following the quicker route along the road. The two meet again after around 500 metres, where you can resume hiking along the track as it skirts the dry crater to the south of Lake Surprise. Views into the crater are largely obscured by thick vegetation until just before the track joins up again with the road.

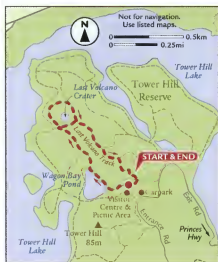
The trail then climbs towards Mount Eccles' summit, joining up with the Crater Rim track along the way. This is as steep as the track gets, and a bench seat and trig mark the mountain's 196-metre tree-covered apex. There are better views if you continue on towards the car park. The trees eventually subside and you'll have an uninterrupted outlook over Lake Surprise and the forest beyond. Mount Richmond is visible to the south. From here, you can also see where you've walked through the lava canal, and it's an ideal spot to sit on the grass and watch the sun set over the crater rim.

Swamp wallabies are frequent companions on the Lava Canal Trail at Mt Eccles





Hikers at the start of the Journey to the Last Volcano Trail in Tower Hill Reserve



### Journey to the Last Volcano, Tower Hill Reserve

#### WALK AT A GLANCE

Distance: 3km

Time: 1hr

Start/Finish: Worn Gundij Visitor's Centre

#### ACCESS

Directly off the Princes Highway, 15 kilometres west of Warrnambool.

#### NOTES

Tower Hill was once a rich source of food for the indigenous Koroit Gundij people, until European settlers cleared away much of the vegetation inside its crater for grazing, cropping, quarrying and waste disposal. In an effort to halt further degradation, Tower Hill was declared as

Victoria's first national park. However, local farmers continued to flout these conservation regulations to the point where the crater was practically barren by 1950. In 1961, Tower Hill was declared a State Game Reserve, with volunteer groups embarking on a vegetation restoration program that eventually attracted birds and animals back into something more resembling their native habitat.

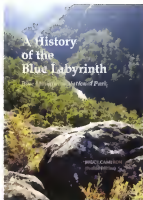
Tower Hill is now known for reliable sightings of emus. Koalas, kangaroos, sugar gliders and water birds – such as musk ducks, spoonbills and black swans – are also found here. You don't actually have to undertake any of the various hikes around the park to see these native animals – motorists inside the park boundaries are frequently forced to give way to jaywalking emus – but it certainly increases your chances.

At the time of visiting, the most reliable area to see emus was around the grassy slopes beneath Tower Hill itself, inside the crater. Time it right and you'll even spot some impossibly cute chicks. It's unlikely you'll find emus at the top but you will be able to walk within metres of them near the start of the walk, before you reach a stepped scoria path to the summit. Climb through sheoak forest to the top, where the wind whistles through their needle-like leaves. Once there, you'll gain excellent views over Tower Hill Lake towards the crater's western rim.

Tower Hill is what's known as a nested maar and it is believed to have erupted 30,000 years ago when lava from beneath the Earth's crust came into contact with the subterranean water table. The eruption

that followed created the main funnel-shaped crater with a diameter measuring over three kilometres across. The islands and cone-shaped hills inside the rim were formed by further volcanic activity within the crater.

The aboriginal-run Visitor's Centre is as good a place as any to start any number of hikes on offer in Tower Hill. If you really want to explore the park in its entirety, follow a path that skirts the lake before it climbs the outer rim to Von Guerard Lookout, named after the nineteenth century artist Eugene von Guerard, whose detailed paintings helped identify the many native plants that grew inside the crater before it was stripped of vegetation. You can, however, drive to this lookout and another one several hundred metres further west, called Koroit Lookout. I was driven towards the enticingly coined Journey to the Last Volcano walk by its name. Fallen sheoak needles insulate your footsteps as you ascend a path towards a less obvious crater rim to the north of the visitor centre. Once you reach the rim, the trail rises and dips with the contours of the caldera. Black water fills this lake within a lake, with thick algae on its surface casting doubts over the lake's purity. However, the sight of ducks paddling across its surface helps dispel that. The best views over this hidden crater lake are at the northern end. Keep an eye out for black swamp wallabies beside the trail leading back to the visitor centre. They're habituated to humans so it's unlikely they'll scurry off in a hurry. The meandering trail eventually descends to a picnic ground carpeted with flowering (but feral) English forget-me-nots during spring.



## A HISTORY OF THE BLUE LABYRINTH (2ND EDITION) – GUEST REVIEW BY ROGER LEMBIT by Bruce Cameron (self published, \$59.95)

The Blue Labyrinth is a maze of hills and valley stretching southwards from the Blue Mountains towns of Springwood and Glenbrook. This wilderness has been Bruce Cameron's playground since the 1960s. His love and fascination for the area, its history and its people are evident in the detailed text and well produced photographs that enliven the book. He highlights the history of the Aboriginal people who lived in the area and left their mark on the landscape that supported them. His tales of the people who have enjoyed this place are, quite simply, fascinating. Cameron yearns for the area to be better protected from future development of the lower Blue Mountains towns. Yet he rightly recognises the conundrum entailed in the publishing of his book, which may lead to yet more visitors and consequent damage. As Ian Brown states in his foreword, this is a beautiful and intriguing area. Who better than Bruce Cameron to meticulously paint a deeply satisfying picture of its history and its unique values?



## BUSH CAMPING WITH DOGS: THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO DOG FRIENDLY CAMPING IN AUSTRALIA (3RD EDITION)

by John Frith (Flat Earth Mapping, \$34.95)

Compiled and produced by John Frith's cartography company, Flat Earth Mapping, Bush Camping with Dogs is an informative guide to the best locations to go camping when you can't bear to leave man's best friend behind. Every state is covered in the comprehensive campsite listings section, which is partnered by beautiful maps – all in full colour. While the listings form the meat of the 200+ page guide, there are also helpful notes on how to be a responsible dog owner when camping so as not to disturb neighbours or cause your pet any discomfort, e.g.: 'Some dogs will not like being in a car, and in these cases, it may be necessary to slowly get them accustomed to being in a vehicle with several short trips.' Containing information on more than 1,300 campsites and 500 parks, forests and rest sites, it's hard to conceive of a better (or more niche) resource for lovers of canines and camping.

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**The Wild Directory is a reference point for outdoors-related businesses worldwide. List your firm for only \$48 an issue (\$58 in spot red).**

For more information, contact Gayle Shapcott via email on [gayleshapcott@primecreative.com.au](mailto:gayleshapcott@primecreative.com.au) or telephone 03 9590 8766

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## PUBLICATIONS

#### Rock back issues

Copies of the following back issues remain, priced at \$8.99 each: no 1 (pocket-sized reproduction with plastic cover) and all issues from no 21 onwards, many containing free

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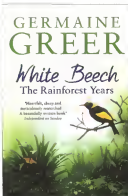
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## WHITE BEECH: THE RAINFOREST YEARS

by Germaine Greer (Bloomsbury, \$19.99)

While her rhetoric and opinions may not resonate with every reader, Germaine Greer's *White Beech: The Rainforest Years* presents the author as placed in a scenario where can do nothing but follow her conservationist instincts. Informative and in a matter-of-fact, overtly-Aussie tone, Greer tells the story of a property she visited in the Numinbah Valley of southeast Queensland in December 2001. Although searching for a place to store her archives, she is drawn towards an abandoned dairy farm despite its unsuitability. Rather, Greer finds herself becoming obsessed with the ailing patch of forest she discovers on the property's upper slopes and sets about rehabilitating it as well as raising money for its future sustainability. Not satisfied in leaving the polemics aside completely, the narrative reveals a fragile habitat that has been, and continues to be, devastated by European colonisation, settlement and commercial interests.

## PADDLESAFE WATERWAYS GUIDE APP

by PaddleNSW (Quoll Designs, FREE)

In October 2014, the NSW parliamentary secretary for police and emergency services, Geoff Provost launched a partner app for the popular Waterways Guide website. The resource has been produced in partnership between PaddleNSW and NSW Roads and Maritime Services in order to offer users a wealth of information on everything related to kayaking and canoeing in NSW. With interactive maps, colour photography and a surprising depth of informative content, this mobile app has been built with a new generation of paddler in mind. Jessica Yarris, visitor from the US, dedicated paddler and user of the app, wrote: 'This app has provided me with hundreds of water trip recommendations, entry and exit points for paddling, and perhaps most importantly, allows me to both invite friends on a journey, and update them if I haven't arrived at a particular destination. I cannot recommend PaddleSafe strongly enough, and because it uses information supplied by fellow adventures, the more people who utilise the app, the more useful it will be.'

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# Blast from the past



Bob Killip and Brian Morrissey struggled through their last point of 1991 winter on Kailash Peak, Gangotri, while the 1991 Indo-Australian Military Expedition, led by Major General Peter Cosgrove, was still in the area. The expedition was the first to reach the summit of Kailash Peak, a 21,957m mountain in the Himalayas. The expedition was the first to reach the summit of Kailash Peak, a 21,957m mountain in the Himalayas. The expedition was the first to reach the summit of Kailash Peak, a 21,957m mountain in the Himalayas.

In 1991, a team of Australian and Indian mountaineers set out to reach the summit of Kailash Peak, a 21,957m mountain in the Himalayas. The expedition was the first to reach the summit of Kailash Peak, a 21,957m mountain in the Himalayas. The expedition was the first to reach the summit of Kailash Peak, a 21,957m mountain in the Himalayas.



## AS REPORTED IN WILD'S WINTER

issue of 1992, two Australian and three Indian members of the first Indo-Australian Military Expedition reached the summit of Kailash Peak (6,940 metres) in the Gangotri region of India. The mountaineers gained the peak via its north face, which may be the first time this was ever successfully attempted, but the expedition was soon marred by the disappearance of an Indian party member, Havalder Yadav, 'during an epic descent'.

Image Caption: Bob Killip and Brian Morrissey during the 1991 Indo-Australian Military Expedition. Photo: Zac Zaharias.

## WHOSE AD IS IT ANYWAY?

Answer in the next issue

Last issue:  
Roaring 40's (Hallmark Leisure Goods)





## Record-setting adventurer Kyle Williams discusses his path, influences and life philosophy

I wasn't an adventurous or fit kid. In my school years, I participated in physical education and sport, but I was by no means above average when it came to physical things. I was much happier reading a book or playing on the computer.

My life changed when I joined the Australian Army at age 19. Over the next four years, being a physical warrior became my job. Every single day in the Army involved some sort of physical training - or PT. While I wasn't the fittest or strongest soldier, I quickly learned that consistent daily PT combined with a "never quit" attitude meant I could go harder, longer and beat most of my colleagues. In particular, I discovered an innate ability to pack march (hike) for hours on end while carrying heavy loads of up to 30 kilograms.

After leaving the army, I kept involved in fitness and hiked recreationally, but it wasn't until 2006 that I had my first true adventure experience: the Kokoda Track. I provided medical support for a corporate expedition and over the ensuing eight days, the 96-kilometre journey had a life-changing effect on me. Endless hill climbing, relentless rain and the emotional impact of journeying through a real life battlefield, while learning the emotional stories behind it, resonated with me in a way I find hard to explain. I was pushed to my limits physically, mentally and spiritually. The experience left me feeling enriched and truly alive; I was hooked on adventure. Since then, I have guided another six groups across Kokoda.

A year later (2007), my quest for adventure took me to the Snowy Mountains for the first time. Like most adventurous Australians, I went and climbed Mount Kosciuszko. While the hike was not that hard, I did get caught in some bad weather: A whiteout snow blizzard, epic lighting storms and 100-kilometre-an-hour, gale-force winds. Having never experienced such conditions before, I'm not ashamed



to admit I had many moments of doubt and fear. But, in those tough moments, I had an epiphany about what adventure is really about: personal growth. I learned that only when life tests you, only when you are faced with situations that make you doubt yourself or when you have the most to lose, do you ever truly learn about who you are and what you can achieve. For better or worse, getting that kind of reality check forces you to grow as a person. Only through personal growth can we keep moving forward and be ready to face the challenges of tomorrow. Life doesn't get much more authentic than that.

After my epiphany, the Snowy Mountains became my second home. My thirst for adventure and the personal growth that it brought subsequently took me on over 50 expeditions across every part of the Snowy Mountains. In 2008, I came up with the idea of the 'Aussie 10': climbing Australia's 10 highest mountains. With all 10 peaks conveniently located in the Snowy Mountains, I soon turned this adventure idea into a series of highly successful corporate expeditions.

After Aussie 10, I yearned for an even bigger challenge and that's when the idea for completing 'A2k' first materialised. The 'A2k' refers to climbing Australia's

2,000-metre mountain peaks nonstop. After some painstaking planning and research, I discovered Australia had 26 mountain peaks 2,000 metres or above, and again, all are located within the Snowy Mountains.

After two failed attempts over 11 months, I finally succeeded in becoming the first person to complete the A2k nonstop in November 2013. It took 48 hours of continuous hiking, across 130 kilometres of off-trail snow terrain, gaining nearly 6,000 metres of elevation, surviving hours of hallucinations and bone chilling snow blizzards that dropped temperatures down to minus six degrees. Oh, and not forgetting climbing all 26 2,000 metre mountain peaks!

The A2k was by far the hardest thing I have ever done - physically and mentally. I pushed myself so far beyond what I thought I was capable of that I still struggle to understand how I did it.

I returned to the Snowy Mountains in November, 2014 to complete a new challenge called 'A21 Ultra': becoming the first person to run an 82 kilometre ultramarathon through the Snowy Mountains Main Range while climbing the 21 highest mountains. While not as long in distance or time as A2k, it was another massive achievement for me, especially as I'm not a great runner. In fact, 11 months before I could barely run for 20 minutes without pain!

Why do I do it? This is a question I get asked a lot and something I have frequently reflected upon. Besides making me feel alive, the thrill of the challenge, the beauty and freedom of the mountains, it really does come back to the true spirit of adventure: personal growth.

My experience has shown me that, as humans, facing our fears allows us to feel truly alive.



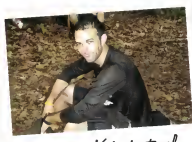
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